



Pre-Historic India

Class 6th NCERT

Chapter 4

Timeline and Sources of History

Timeline and Sources of History

History is “an unending dialogue between the present and the past ... between the society of today and the society of yesterday. ... We can fully understand the present only in the light of the past.”

— E.H. Carr



National Museum, New Delhi. Such museums preserve objects from the past, such as statues, coins and ornaments, all of which help us understand our history.

The Big Questions ?

1. *How do we measure historical time?*
2. *How can various sources help us understand history?*
3. *How did early humans live?*



0681 CH04

How Do We Learn About the Past?



THINK ABOUT IT

- What is the earliest memory you can recollect? Do you remember how old you were at that time? Those memories together are a part of your past, maybe going five or six years back.
- How do you think understanding the past will help us understand the present world?

History: The study of the human past.

You will discover in Science that the Earth has a very, very long **history**, of which we humans occupy only a tiny part — the most recent one.

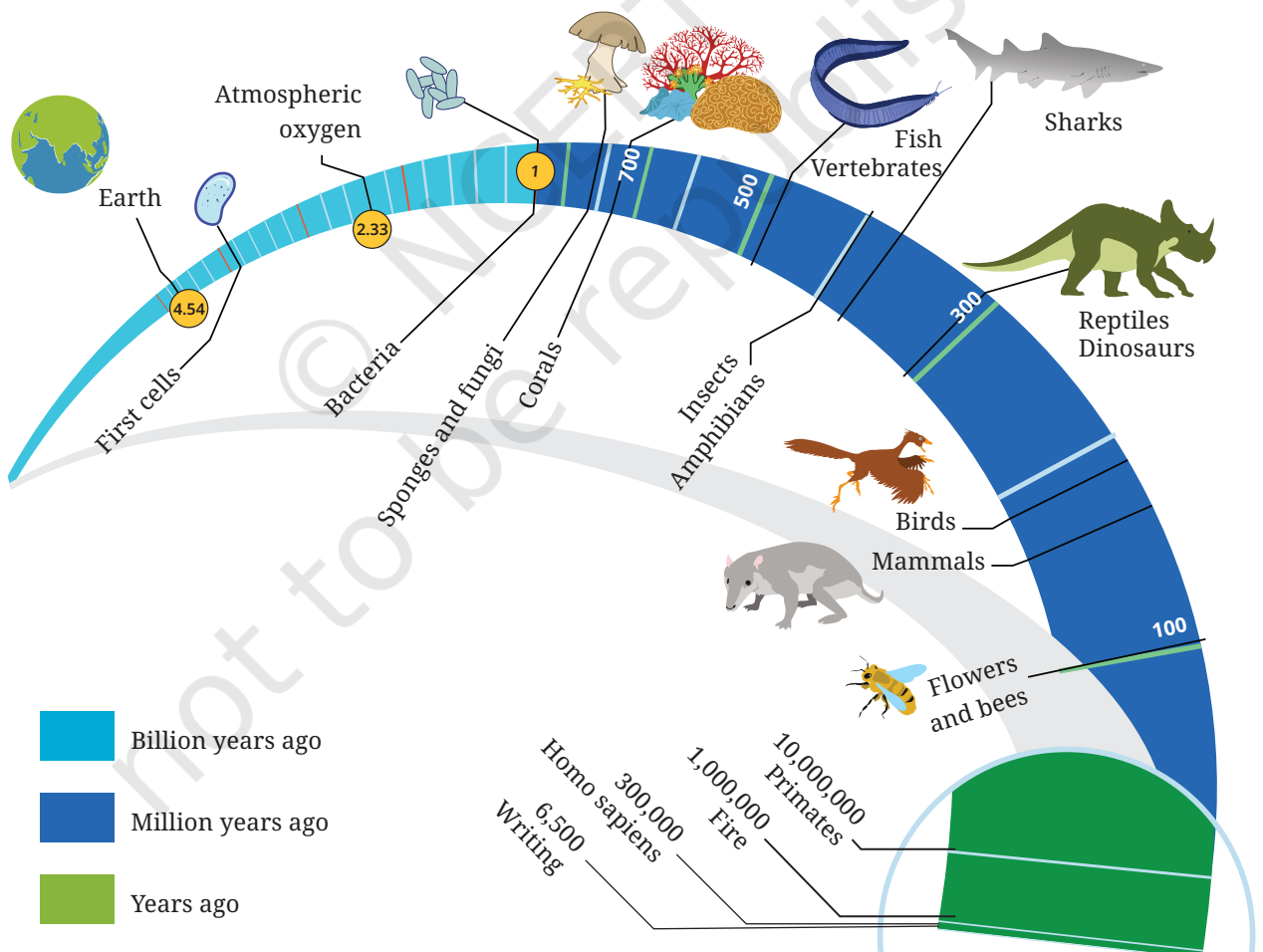


Fig. 4.1. Timeline of a few important stages in the evolution of life on Earth.

Many people study the history of the Earth. Some of them are trained to uncover the secrets left beneath the Earth's surface and help us learn about its past — and also our past.



Fig. 4.2.1: Geologists



Fig. 4.2.2: Palaeontologists



Fig. 4.2.3: Anthropologists



Fig. 4.2.4: Archaeologists

Observe these four pictures and the activities involved. From top left:

- **Geologists** (Fig. 4.2.1) study the physical features of the Earth, like the soil, stones, hills, mountains, rivers, seas, oceans and other such parts of the Earth.
- **Palaeontologists** (Fig. 4.2.2) study the remains of plants, animals and humans from millions of years ago in the form of **fossils**.
- **Anthropologists** (Fig. 4.2.3) study human societies and cultures from the oldest times to the present.
- **Archaeologists** (Fig. 4.2.4) study the past by digging up remains that people, plants and animals left behind, such as tools, pots, beads, figurines, toys, bones and teeth of animals and humans, burnt grains, parts of houses or bricks, among others.

How Is Time Measured in History?

Each society and culture has had its own ways of measuring time. Major events, such as the birth of an important person or the start of a ruler's reign, have often marked the beginning of a new **era**. At present, the **Gregorian**

Fossils: Impressions of footprints, or parts of plants or animals that are found preserved within layers of soil or rocks.

Era: A distinct period of time.

Gregorian calendar: The calendar now used the world over; it has 12 months adding up to 365 days, and a leap year every four years. However, century years — for example, 1800, 1900, 2000 — are leap years only if they are multiples of 400; so in the three centenary years above, only 2000 is a leap year.

Auspicious: favourable or bringing luck; for instance, 'an auspicious beginning'.

calendar is commonly used worldwide; side by side, Hindu, Muslim, Jewish, Chinese and other calendars are also used for calculating the dates of festivals and other **auspicious** events.

In the West, the conventional year for Jesus Christ's birth has generally been taken to be the starting point for this calendar. Years are counted forward from this point and used to be marked with 'AD' (an abbreviation for a Latin phrase that refers to the years after Jesus' birth). However, this is now called the **Common Era** or CE across the world. For example, 1947, the year India gained independence, can be written as 1947 AD (sometimes AD 1947) or 1947 CE.

Similarly, the years before the conventional date for the birth of Jesus are counted backward and used to be marked with BC (or Before Christ). They are now called **Before Common Era** or BCE. For example, 560 BCE is an approximate year of birth of Gautama Buddha (whom we

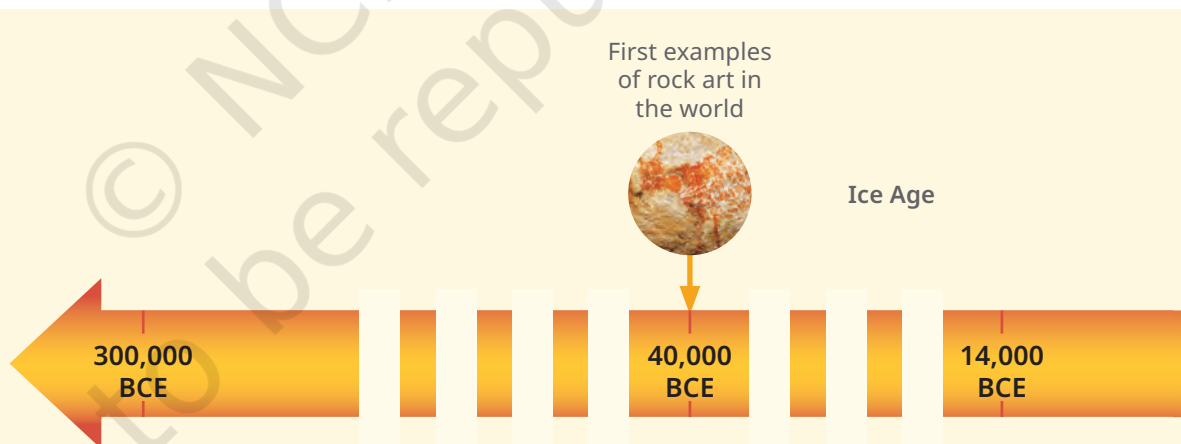
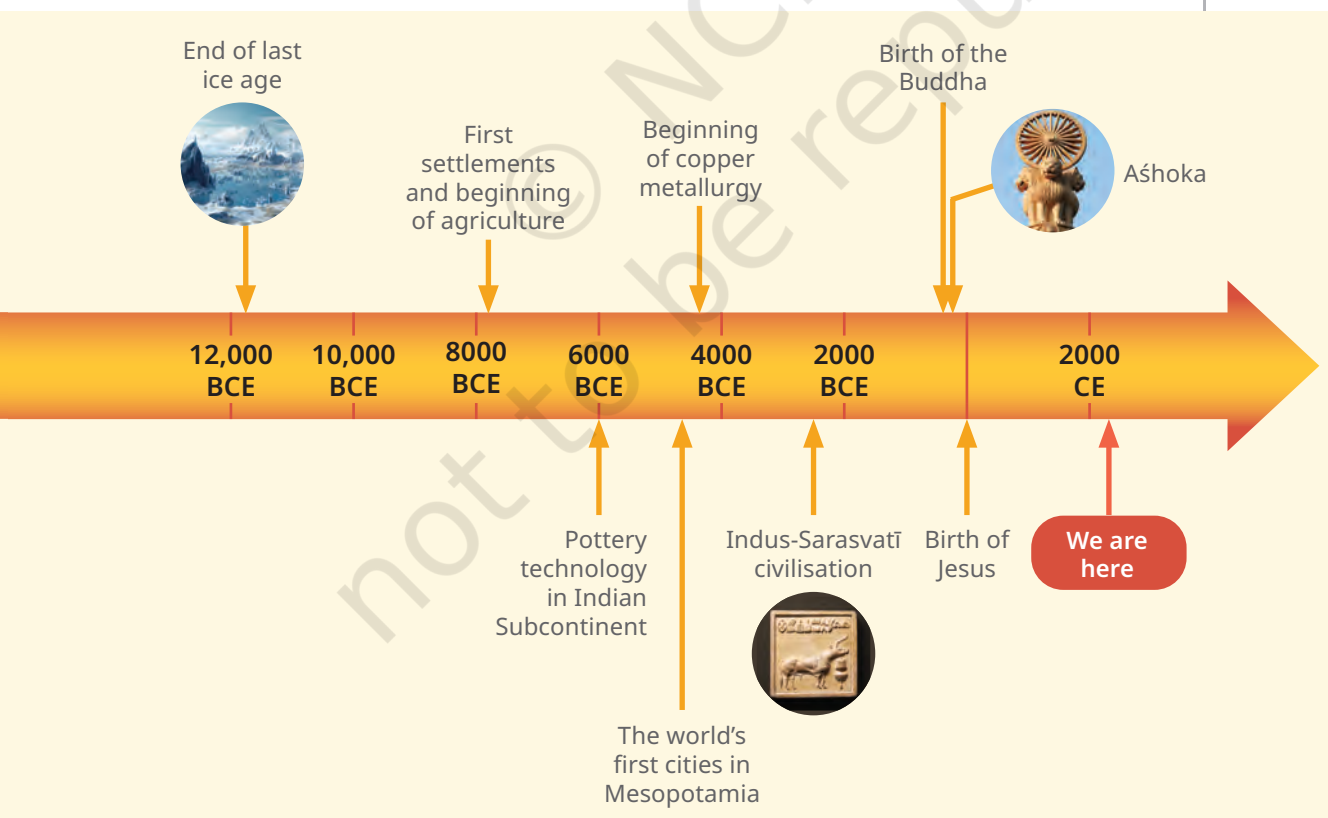


Fig. 4.3. Timeline of some main events since 300,000 BCE

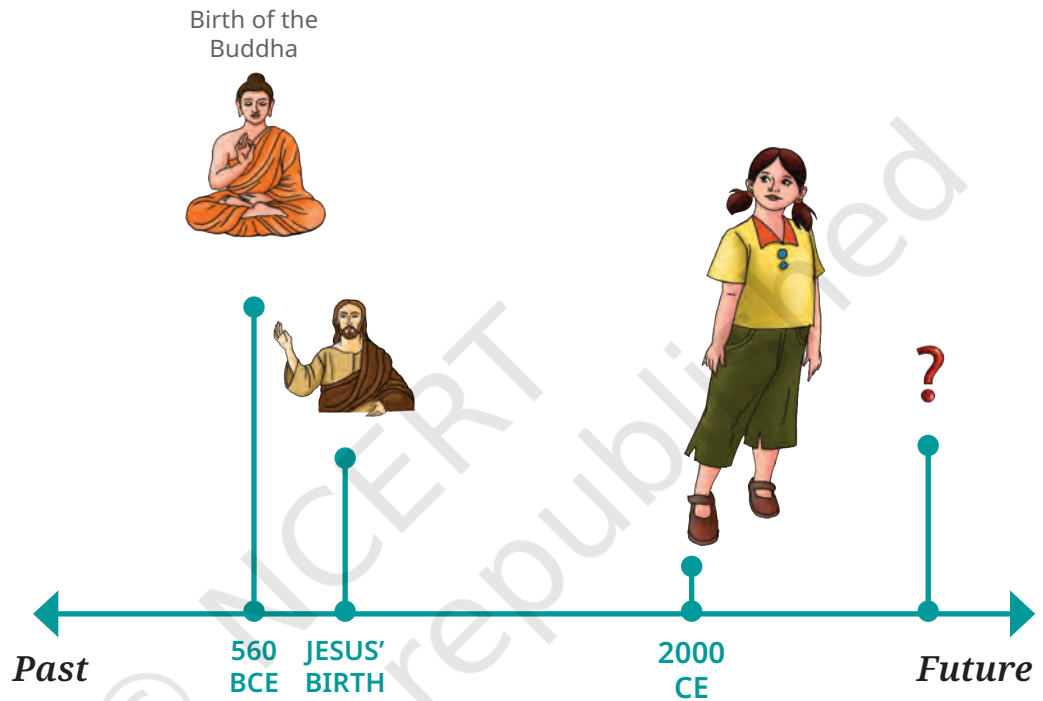
will meet in Chapter 7). Can you calculate how many years ago that was?

LET'S EXPLORE

- Such calculations are simple, but there is a catch. In the Gregorian calendar, there is no 'year zero'. The year 1 CE follows immediately the year 1 BCE. Draw a simple timeline marking every year from 2 BCE to 2 CE; you will see that because of the absence of a year zero, only 3 years have passed between those two dates.
- So to calculate the number of years between a BCE date and a CE date, you should add them but subtract 1 — in the above case, $2 + 2 - 1 = 3$.
- Practice a few examples with your classmates. For example, to return to the question about the Buddha, suppose we are now in the year 2024 CE, then the Buddha was born $560 + 2024 - 1 = 2,583$ years ago.



A **timeline** (see Fig. 4.3 on pages 62 and 63) is a convenient tool to mark such events, as it shows a sequence of dates and events covering any particular period. It runs from the beginning of humanity to the present, with a few important landmarks. Note that the dotted portion marks a skipped period; otherwise, this timeline would have to be almost 3 metres long!



A timeline also helps in understanding the order in which historical events take place. For example, even without looking at dates, you can now see that the birth of Buddha occurs before that of Jesus.



DON'T MISS OUT

Along with a year and a decade (a period of ten years), we often use other terms to understand longer durations of time. Two of these are quite commonly used when learning about history.

1. **Century:** It is any period of 100 years. In history, specific centuries are counted every 100 years starting from the year 1 CE. For instance, we are currently in the 21st century CE, which runs from 2001 to 2100.

The centuries BCE are calculated beginning from the year 1 BCE and keep going back in time. For example, the 3rd century BCE would include the years 300 BCE to 201 BCE.

- 2. Millennium:** It is any period of 1,000 years. In history, specific centuries are counted every 1,000 years from the year 1 CE. For instance, we are currently in the 3rd millennium CE, which began in 2001 CE and will go up to 3000 CE.

As with centuries, millenniums BCE are also calculated beginning from 1 BCE and go backwards. So the 1st millennium BCE would include the years 1 BCE to 1000 BCE.

In the timeline given on pages 62 and 63 (Fig. 4.3), can you mark the beginning of the 8th millennium BCE? (*Note: In English, the plural of 'millennium' is 'millenniums' or 'millennia'; both are correct.*)

LET'S EXPLORE

Create a timeline stretching from 1900 CE to the current year and place the dates of birth of your grandparents, parents, siblings and yourself. Also, mark the years that the 20th century CE begins with and ends with.



DON'T MISS OUT

Do you know how calendars have been traditionally made in India? Many Indian calendars rely on the positions of the sun and the moon to define the months of the year. A *pañchānga* is a book of tables which lists the days of each month along with related astronomical data; for instance, it precisely predicts events like solar and lunar eclipses, times for sunrise and sunset, etc. *Pañchāngas*, still widely used in India, often also give weather predictions for the year, dates and timings of festivals, and more.

Source of history: A place, person, text or an object from which we gather information about some past event or period.



What Are the Sources of History?

LET'S EXPLORE

Can you collect information about at least three generations of your family on your mother's and father's sides? Create a family tree with your parents, grandparents and great-grandparents. Find out their names, what they did for a living and where they were born. Also, write the sources from where you got this information.

Relation	Name	Occupation	Place of birth	Source of information
Grandparents (paternal)				
Grandparents (maternal)				
Great-grandparents (paternal)				
Great-grandparents (maternal)				

How did you find details about your family's past? Did you rely on things like photographs, diaries, ID cards or memories from your parents and relatives?



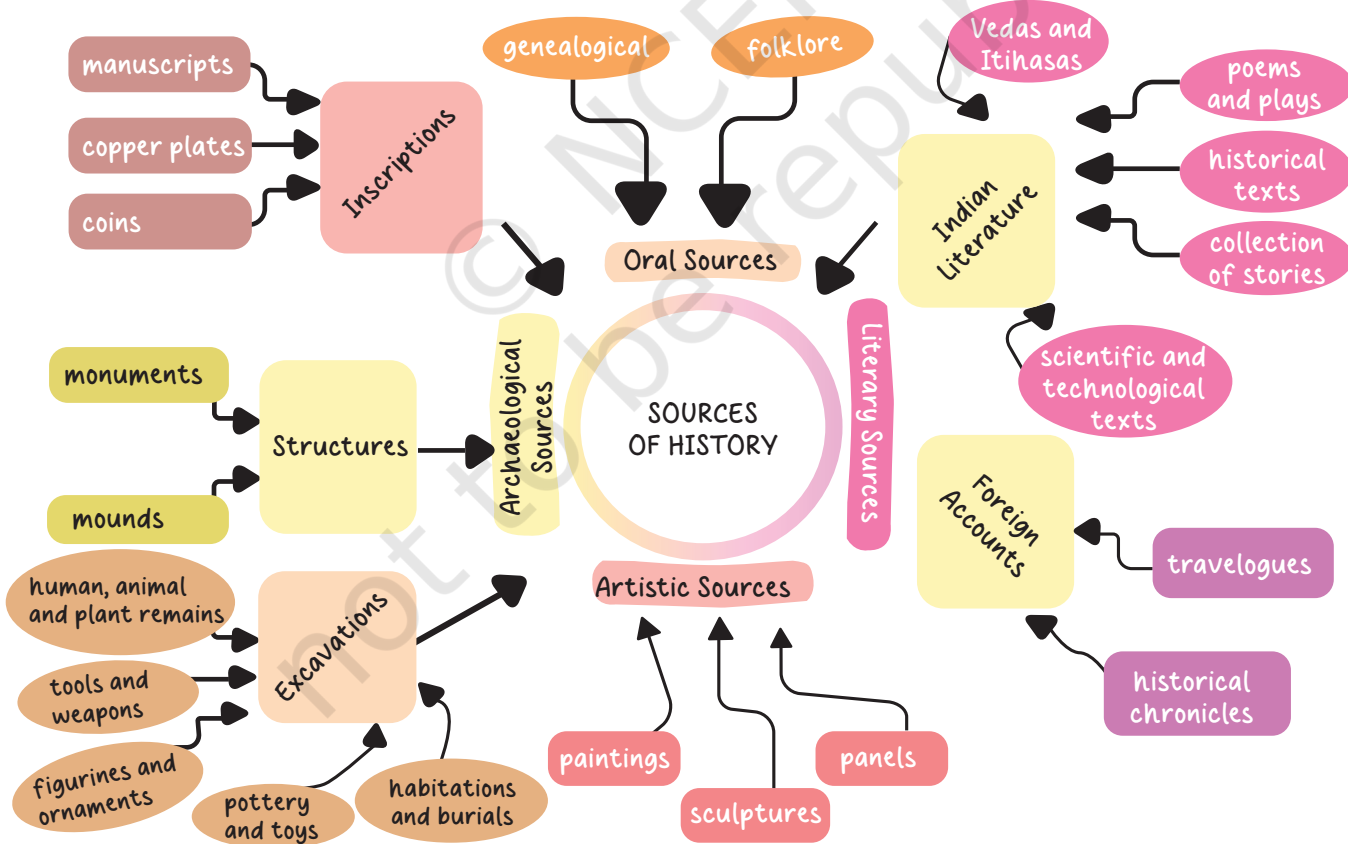
THINK ABOUT IT

Have you ever seen old coins, books, clothes, jewellery or utensils in and around your house? What type of information can we gain from such objects? Or from old houses or buildings?



Every object or structure tells a story and is like a piece in a jigsaw puzzle. The objects that you see around your house convey something of the history of your family. Similarly, we can put together historical events through a variety of sources. But keep in mind that in the case of history, quite a few pieces of the puzzle may remain missing!

Observe the figure at the bottom of the page. It brings together the main sources of history. You do not need to



Historian: A person who studies and writes about the past.

remember them all now; we will use some of them as we go along. When **historians** study, say, a king or queen of 1,500 years ago, an ancient monument, a war or some items of trade, they take great care to gather information from as many sources as they can find and consult. Sometimes, the sources confirm each other (the jigsaw pieces match); at other times, sources may give contradictory information (the jigsaw pieces don't match), in which case they need to decide which source they can trust more. That is how they try to re-create the history of the period they are studying.

Who contributes to all these sources of history? Historians themselves, but also archaeologists, epigraphists (who study ancient inscriptions), anthropologists (who study human societies and their cultures), experts in literature and languages, and some more. In addition, in the last 50 years or so, scientific studies have been contributing more and more to the reconstruction of the past. For example, studies of ancient climates, chemical studies of excavated materials and studies of the **genetics** of ancient people have provided fresh insights, which supplement the more usual sources. And when historians study recent history (which usually means the last two or three centuries), another source is newspapers; for the last few decades, electronic media (television, the internet, etc.) can also be consulted.

Genetics: The branch of biology that studies how, in plants, animals or humans, certain features and characteristics get passed down from one generation to the next.

LET'S EXPLORE

There are a few images of different sources of history on the next page. Who and what do you think the objects show? Write down in the boxes next to the images any information that you get from these objects.





Handwriting practice area with three sets of red dashed lines on a light beige background.

Handwriting practice area with three sets of red dashed lines on a light beige background.



Handwriting practice area with three sets of red dashed lines on a light beige background.



The Beginnings of Human History

Modern humans (*Homo sapiens*) have walked the planet for about 300,000 (three lakh) years. This appears to be a very long time, yet it is only a tiny fraction of the Earth's history. Let us have a quick look at our early history.



LET'S EXPLORE

In the above picture, look at some activities of early humans in a rock shelter. Which ones can you recognise? Give a brief description for each.

Early humans faced many challenges from nature and lived in bands or groups to help each other. They were constantly seeking shelter and food, and were mainly hunters and gatherers; this means that they relied on hunting and collecting edible plants and fruits for their survival. Our early ancestors also had certain beliefs about the natural elements and possibly also some notion of **afterlife**.

Afterlife:
A life
that begins
after death.

These groups lived in temporary camps, rock shelters or caves, and communicated with each other using languages that are now lost. They used fire and started making objects that made their lives easier, like improved stone axes and blades, arrowheads and other tools. Aspects of their life are visible in rock paintings found in hundreds of caves all over the world. Some of those paintings depict simple figures or a few symbols; others are more detailed and represent scenes with animals or humans. In time, these early humans learned to make simple ornaments such as stone or shell beads, pendants made of animal teeth, and sometimes exchanged them with other groups.

The First Crops

Over long ages, the Earth's climate has gone through many changes. At certain times, it was very cold and much of the Earth was covered with ice — this is called an 'Ice Age', as you will learn in greater detail in Science. Later, when the climate warmed up, this ice partly melted, and the resulting waters swelled the existing rivers and eventually drained into the oceans. The last Ice Age lasted from over 100,000 (one lakh) years ago to around 12,000 years ago.

Afterwards, living conditions improved for humans; in many parts of the world, they started settling down and cultivating cereals and grains. They also domesticated animals such as cattle, goats, etc. With more food available, these communities grew in size and number, and often settled down near rivers. This was not only because of the availability of water, but also because the soil would be more fertile there. It made the process of growing crops easier.

LET'S EXPLORE

Observe the scene on the next page. It depicts an agricultural community from a few millenniums ago. List the main activities you can identify.





THINK ABOUT IT

- ◆ Both in the earlier picture of a rock shelter and in this one, men and women are given certain roles. While they may appear to be ‘natural’, they are not necessarily accurate and do not cover all situations. For instance, in a rock shelter, women may have helped prepare colours for painting the rock or may have done some of the painting. In both scenes, men may have done some of the cooking or may have helped take care of children.
- ◆ Keeping in mind that we have only limited information, think about such roles and situations, and discuss in class.

As communities grew, so did their social complexity. Leaders or ‘chieftains’ were responsible for the well-being of the people, and everyone collectively worked towards the community’s **welfare**. For example, there was no sense of individual ownership; the lands were collectively sowed and harvested.

As time went by, **hamlets** grew into sizeable villages that exchanged goods — mostly food, clothing and tools. Slowly, networks of communication and exchange were established among those villages, and some of them grew into small towns. New technologies appeared — for example pottery, for making pots and other clay objects; and the use of metal (copper first, iron later), which helped make durable tools, objects of daily use and ornaments.

We will see in Chapter 6 how this stage prepared for the emergence of what is called ‘civilisation’. For now, it is important to remember that this early progress of humanity had to face many challenges. At some critical times, humanity could have almost disappeared, as some earlier species did. We will never know those early humans to whose courage and persistence we owe our existence today.

Before we move on ...

- We have explored some ways to learn more about our pasts. The concept of a timeline helps us understand the sequence of historical events at different times.
- There are different ways of measuring time: years, decades, centuries, millenniums.
- Sources of history are many; they help us reconstruct and interpret historical events.
- We have also had a brief look into the lives of early humans and how human societies grew more complex in time.

Welfare:
Health, prosperity and well-being.

Hamlet:
A small settlement or small village.



Questions, activities and projects

1. As a project, write the history of your family (or village if you live in one), using sources of history at your disposal. Ask your teacher to guide you.
2. Can we compare historians to detectives? Give reasons for your answers.
3. A few exercises with dates:
 - Place these dates chronologically on the timeline: 323 CE, 323 BCE, 100 CE, 100 BCE, 1900 BCE, 1090 CE, 2024 CE.
 - If King Chandragupta was born in 320 CE, which century did he belong to? And how many years was that after the Buddha's birth?
 - Rani of Jhansi was born in 1828. Which century did she belong to? How many years was that before India's Independence?
 - Turn '12,000 years ago' into a date.
4. Plan a visit to a nearby museum: the visit should be prepared with some prior research on the kind of exhibits the museum holds. Keep notes during the visit. Write a brief report afterwards, highlighting what was unexpected / interesting / fun about the visit and the exhibits.
5. Invite to your school an archaeologist or a historian and ask them to speak on the history of your region and why it's important to know it.



Pre-Historic India

Class 11th NCERT Fine Arts

Chapter 1

Pre-Historic Rock Paintings



1

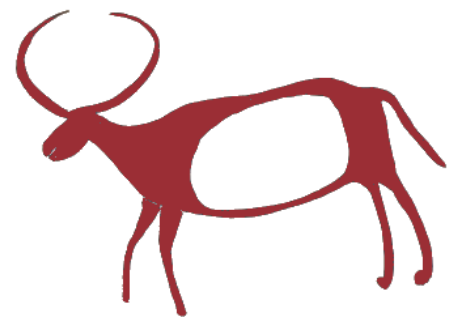
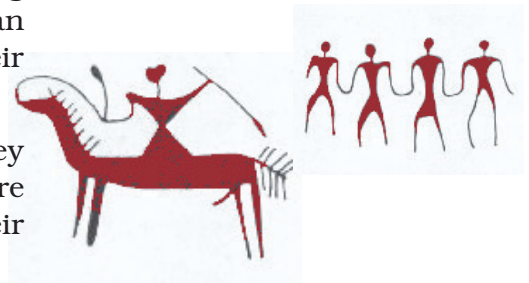
PREHISTORIC ROCK PAINTINGS

THE distant past when there was no paper or language or the written word, and hence no books or written documents, is called prehistory or as we often say, prehistoric times. How people lived in those times was difficult to surmise until scholars began to discover the places where prehistoric people lived. Excavation at these places brought to light old tools, pottery, habitats, bones of ancient human beings and animals, and drawings on cave walls. By piecing together the information deduced from these objects and the cave drawings, scholars have constructed fairly accurate knowledge about what happened and how people lived in prehistoric times. **When the basic needs of food, water, clothing and shelter were fulfilled people felt the need to express themselves.** Painting and drawing were the oldest art forms practised by human beings to express themselves, using the cave walls as their canvas.

Why did prehistoric people draw these pictures? They may have drawn and painted to make their shelters more colourful and beautiful or to keep a visual record of their day-to-day life, like some of us who maintain a diary.

The prehistoric period in the early development of human beings is commonly known as the Old Stone Age or the Palaeolithic Age.

Prehistoric paintings have been found in many parts of the world. We do not really know if Lower Palaeolithic people ever produced any art objects. But by the Upper Palaeolithic times we see a proliferation of artistic activities. Around the world the walls of many caves of this time are full of finely carved and painted pictures of animals which the cave-dwellers hunted. The subjects of their drawings were human figures, human activities, geometric designs and animal symbols. In India the earliest paintings have been reported from the Upper Palaeolithic times.



It is interesting to know that the first discovery of rock paintings was made in India in 1867–68 by an archaeologist, Archibold Carlleyle, twelve years before the discovery of Altamira in Spain. Cockburn, Anderson, Mitra and Ghosh were the early archaeologists who discovered a large number of sites in the Indian sub-continent.

Remnants of rock paintings have been found on the walls of the caves situated in several districts of Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Bihar. Some paintings have been reported from the Kumaon hills in Uttarakhand also. The rock shelters on banks of the River Suyal at Lakhudiyar, about twenty kilometres on the Almora–Barechina road, bear these prehistoric paintings. Lakhudiyar literally means one lakh caves. The paintings here can be divided into three categories: man, animal and geometric patterns in white, black and red ochre. Humans are represented in stick-like forms. A long-snouted animal, a fox and a multiple legged lizard are the main animal motifs. Wavy lines, rectangle-filled geometric designs, and groups of dots can also be seen here. One of the interesting scenes depicted here is of hand-linked dancing human figures. There is some superimposition of paintings. The earliest are in black; over these are red ochre paintings and the last group comprises white paintings. From Kashmir two slabs with engravings have been reported. The granite rocks of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh provided suitable canvases to the Neolithic man for his paintings. There are several such sites but more famous among them are Kupgallu, Piklihal and Tekkalkota. Three types of paintings have been reported from here—paintings in white, paintings in red ochre over a white background and paintings in red ochre. These



Hand-linked dancing figures, Lakhudiyar, Uttarakhand



Wavy lines, Lakhudiyar, Uttarakhand

paintings belong to late historical, early historical and Neolithic periods. The subjects depicted are bulls, elephants, sambhars, gazelles, sheep, goats, horses, stylised humans, tridents, but rarely, vegetal motifs.

But the richest paintings are reported from the Vindhya ranges of Madhya Pradesh and their Kaimurean extensions into Uttar Pradesh. These hill ranges are full of Palaeolithic and Mesolithic remains, and they are also full of forests, wild plants, fruits, streams and creeks, thus a perfect place for Stone Age people to live. Among these the largest and most spectacular rock-shelter is located in the Vindhya hills at Bhimbetka in Madhya Pradesh. Bhimbetka is located forty-five kilometres south of Bhopal, in an area of ten square kilometres, having about eight hundred rock shelters, five hundred of which bear paintings.

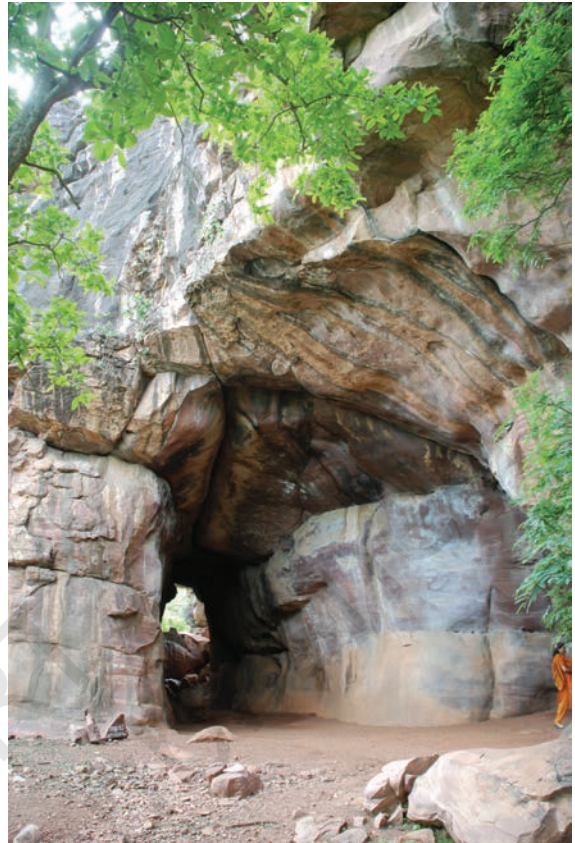
The caves of Bhimbetka were discovered in 1957-58 by eminent archaeologist V.S. Wakankar and later on many more were discovered. Wakankar spent several years in surveying these inaccessible hills and jungles to study these paintings.

The themes of paintings found here are of great variety, ranging from mundane events of daily life in those times to sacred and royal images. These include hunting, dancing, music, horse and elephant riders, animal fighting, honey collection, decoration of bodies, and other household scenes.

The rock art of Bhimbetka has been classified into various groups on the bases of style, technique and superimposition. The drawings and paintings can be categorised into seven historical periods. Period I, Upper Palaeolithic; Period II, Mesolithic; and Period III, Chalcolithic. After Period III there are four successive periods. But we will confine ourselves here only to the first three phases.

Upper Palaeolithic Period

The paintings of the Upper Palaeolithic phase are linear representations, in green and dark red, of huge animal figures, such as bisons, elephants, tigers, rhinos and boars besides stick-like human figures. A few are wash paintings but mostly they are filled with



Cave entrance, Bhimbetka, Madhya Pradesh

Can you figure out what the artist is trying to depict in this painting?



geometric patterns. The green paintings are of dancers and the red ones of hunters.

Mesolithic Period

The largest number of paintings belong to Period II that covers the Mesolithic paintings. During this period the themes are multiple but the paintings are smaller in size. Hunting scenes predominate. The hunting scenes depict people hunting in groups, armed with barbed spears, pointed sticks, arrows and bows. In some paintings these primitive men are shown with traps and snares probably to catch animals. The hunters are shown wearing simple clothes and ornaments. Sometimes, men have been adorned with elaborate head-dresses, and sometimes painted with masks also. Elephant, bison, tiger, boar, deer, antelope, leopard, panther, rhinoceros, fish, frog, lizard, squirrel and at times birds are also depicted. The Mesolithic artists loved to paint animals. In some pictures, animals are chasing men. In others they are being chased and hunted by men. Some of the animal paintings, especially in the hunting scenes, show a fear of animals, but many others show a feeling of tenderness and love for them. There are also a few engravings representing mainly animals.

Though animals were painted in a naturalistic style, humans were depicted only in a stylistic manner. Women are painted both in the nude and clothed. The young and the old equally find place in these paintings. Children are painted running, jumping and playing. Community dances provide a common theme. There are paintings of people gathering fruit or honey from trees, and of women grinding and preparing food. Some of the pictures of men, women and children seem to depict a sort of family life. In many of the rock-shelters we find hand prints, fist prints, and dots made by the fingertips.

The artists of Bhimbetka used many colours, including various shades of white, yellow, orange, red ochre, purple, brown, green and black. But white and red were their favourite colours. The paints were made by grinding various rocks and minerals. They got red from haematite (known as *geru* in India). The green came from a green variety of a stone called chalcedony. White might have been

One of the few images showing only one animal, Bhimbetka



made out of limestone. The rock of mineral was first ground into a powder. This may then have been mixed with water and also with some thick or sticky substance such as animal fat or gum or resin from trees. Brushes were made of plant fibre. What is amazing is that these colours have survived thousands of years of adverse weather conditions. It is believed that the colours have remained intact because of the chemical reaction of the oxide present on the surface of the rocks.



Painting showing a man being hunted by a beast, Bhimbetka

The artists here made their paintings on the walls and ceilings of the rock shelters. Some of the paintings are reported from the shelters where people lived. But some others were made in places which do not seem to have been living spaces at all. Perhaps these places had some religious importance. Some of the most beautiful paintings are very high up on rock shelters or close to the ceilings of rock-shelters. One may wonder why early human beings chose to paint on a rock in such an uncomfortable position. The paintings made at these places were perhaps for people to be able to notice them from a distance.

Why has the animal been shown so big and man so small?

The paintings, though from the remote past, do not lack pictorial quality. Despite various limitations such as acute working conditions, inadequate tools, materials, etc., there is a charm of simple rendering of scenes of the environment in which the artists lived. The men shown in them appear adventurous and rejoicing in their lives. The animals are shown more youthful and majestic than perhaps they actually were. The primitive artists seem to possess an intrinsic passion for storytelling. These pictures depict, in a dramatic way, both men and animals engaged in the struggle for survival. In one of the scenes, a group of people have been shown hunting a bison. In the process, some injured men are depicted lying scattered on the ground. In another scene, an animal is shown in the agony of death and the men are depicted dancing. These kinds of paintings might have given man a sense of power over the animals he would meet in the open.

This practice is common among primitive people of today also. They engrave or paint on rocks as part of the rituals they perform at birth, at death, at coming of age and at the time of marriage. They dance, masked, during hunting rites to help them kill animals difficult to find or kill.

HUNTING SCENE



Hunting scenes predominate in Mesolithic paintings. This is one such scene where a group of people are shown hunting a bison. Some injured men are depicted lying scattered on the ground. These paintings show mastery in the skill of drawing these forms.

DANCING SCENE



In this picture hand-linked figures in dancing mode are shown. In fact, this is a recurrent theme. It also recalls the dancing scene from the Lakhudiyar rock painting found in Uttarakhand.

The paintings of individual animals show the mastery of skill of the primitive artist in drawing these forms. Both, proportion and tonal effect, have been realistically maintained in them.

It is interesting to note that at many rock-art sites often a new painting is painted on top of an older painting. At Bhimbetka, in some places, there are as many as 20 layers of paintings, one on top of another. Why did the artists paint in the same place again and again? Maybe, this was because the artist did not like his creation and painted another painting on the previous one, or some of the paintings and places were considered sacred or special or this was because the area may have been used by different generations of people at different times.

These prehistoric paintings help us to understand about early human beings, their lifestyle, their food habits, their daily activities and, above all, they help us understand their mind—the way they thought. Prehistoric period remains are a great witness to the evolution of human civilisation, through the numerous rock weapons, tools, ceramics and bones. More than anything else, the rock paintings are the greatest wealth the primitive human beings of this period left behind.

EXERCISE

1. According to your observation how did the people of prehistoric times select themes for their paintings?
2. What could have been the reasons for depicting more animal figures than human figures in cave paintings?
3. Many visuals of prehistoric cave paintings have been given in this chapter. Among these which one do you like the most and why? Give a critical appreciation of the visual.
4. Other than Bhimbetka, which are the other major sites where these prehistoric paintings have been found? Prepare a report on different aspects of these paintings with pictures or line drawings.
5. In modern times, how have walls been used as a surface to make paintings, graphics, etc?



Pre-Historic India

Tamil Nadu Class 11th History Book

Chapter 2

Pre-Historic India and the Harappan Culture

V. State whether the following statements are true or False.

1. The city of Pataliputra was situated at the confluence of Ganges with Brahmaputra.
2. The long coast line in the southern peninsula contributed to the growth of maritime trade.
3. The Palghat Pass is situated on the Western Ghats.
4. India is a multi-cultural society.

VI. Write short notes (Any three points).

1. Himalayan Mountains.
2. Deccan Plateau.
3. Rivers of southern peninsula
4. Multi-cultural society.

VII. Answer briefly (100 words).

1. Write a note on the impact of the Indo-Gangetic Plains on the history of India.
2. Briefly describe the geography of South India.

VIII. Answer in detail (200 words).

1. Assess the impact of geography on the history of India.
2. 'India is a land of unity in diversity' – Elucidate.

LESSON 2

**PRE-HISTORIC INDIA AND
THE HARAPPAN CULTURE**

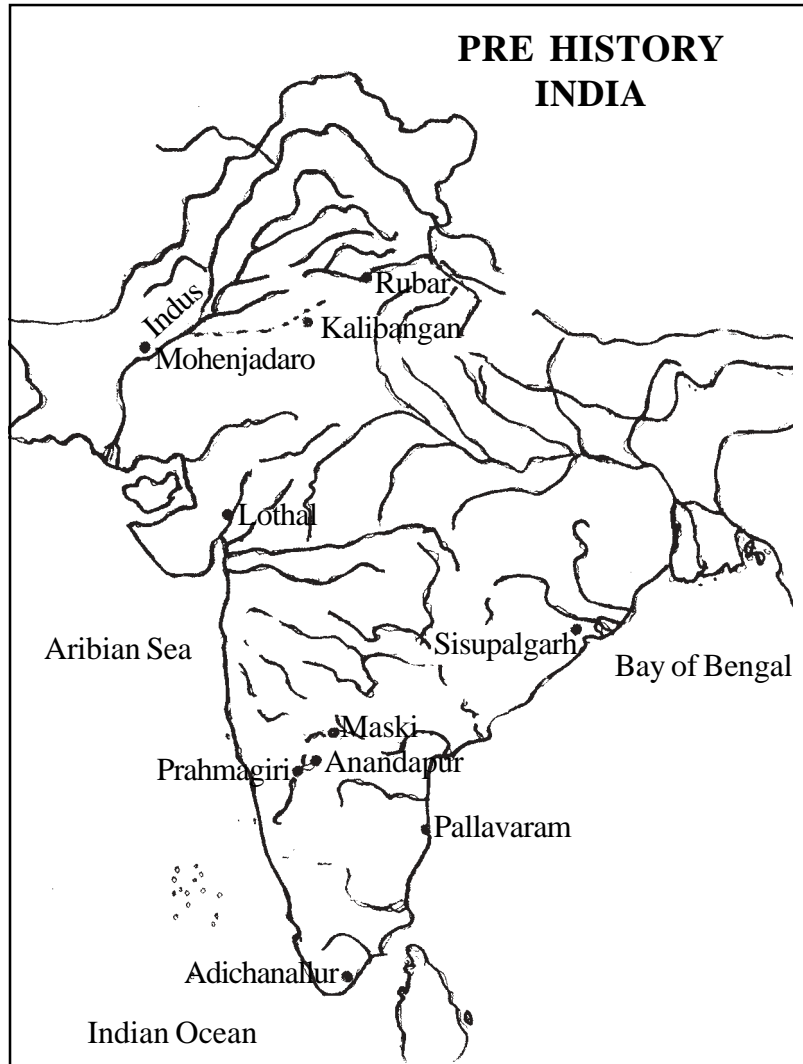
Learning Objectives

Students will acquire knowledge about

1. *The Pre-historic period.*
2. *Origin and evolution of the Harappan Civilization.*
3. *Socio-economic condition of the Harappan people.*
4. *Cultural life of the Harappans.*
5. *The Decline of the Harappan Civilization.*

The history of human settlements in India goes back to prehistoric times. No written records are available for the pre-historic period. However, plenty of archaeological remains are found in different parts of India to reconstruct the history of this period. They include the stone tools, pottery, artifacts and metal implements used by pre-historic people. The development of archaeology helps much to understand the life and culture of the people who lived in this period.

In India, the prehistoric period is divided into the Paleolithic (Old Stone Age), Mesolithic (Middle Stone Age), Neolithic (New Stone Age) and the Metal Age. However, these periods were not uniform throughout the Indian subcontinent. The dating of the pre-historic period is done scientifically. The technique of radio-carbon dating is commonly used for this purpose. It is based on measuring the loss of carbon in organic materials over a period of time. Another dating method is known as dendro-chronology. It refers to the



number of tree rings in wood. By counting the number of tree rings in the wood, the date of the wood is arrived at.

Paleolithic or Old Stone Age

The Old Stone Age sites are widely found in various parts of the Indian subcontinent. These sites are generally located near water sources. Several rock shelters and caves used by the Paleolithic people are scattered across the subcontinent. They also lived rarely in huts made of leaves. Some of the famous sites of Old Stone Age in India are:

- a. The Soan valley and Potwar Plateau on the northwest India.
- b. The Siwalik hills on the north India.
- c. Bhimpetka in Madhya Pradesh.
- d. Adamgarh hill in Narmada valley.
- e. Kurnool in Andhra Pradesh and
- f. Attirampakkam near Chennai.

In the Old Stone Age, food was obtained by hunting animals and gathering edible plants and tubers. Therefore, these people are called as hunter-gatherers. They used stone tools, hand-sized and flaked-off large pebbles for hunting animals. Stone implements are made of a hard rock known as quartzite. Large pebbles are often found in river terraces. The hunting of large animals would have required the combined effort of a group of people with large stone axes. We have little knowledge about their language and communication. Their way of life became modified with the passage of time since they made attempts to domesticate animals, make crude pots and grow some plants. A few Old Stone Age paintings have



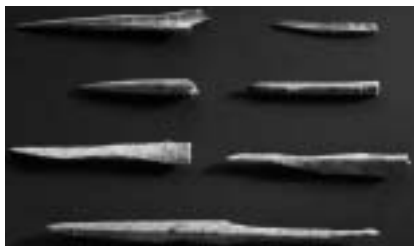
Old Stone Age Tools

also been found on rocks at Bhimbetka and other places. The period before 10000 B.C. is assigned to the Old Stone Age.

Mesolithic or Middle Stone Age

The next stage of human life is called Mesolithic or Middle Stone Age which falls roughly from 10000 B.C. to 6000 B.C. It was the transitional phase between the Paleolithic Age and Neolithic Age. Mesolithic remains are found in Langhanj in Gujarat, Adamgarh in Madhya Pradesh and also in some places of Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. The paintings and engravings found at the rock shelters give an idea about the social life and economic activities of Mesolithic people. In the sites of Mesolithic Age, a different type of stone tools is found. These are tiny stone artifacts, often not more than five centimeters in size, and therefore called microliths. The hunting-gathering pattern of life continued during this period. However, there seems to have been a shift from big animal hunting to small animal hunting and fishing. The use of bow and arrow also began during this period. Also, there began a tendency to settle for longer periods in an area. Therefore, domestication of animals, horticulture and primitive cultivation started. Animal bones are found in these sites and these include dog, deer, boar and ostrich. Occasionally, burials of the dead along with some microliths and shells seem to have been practiced.

Neolithic Age



New Stone Age Tools

A remarkable progress is noticed in human civilization in the Neolithic Age. It is approximately dated from 6000 B.C to 4000 B.C. Neolithic remains are found in various parts of India. These include the Kashmir valley, Chirand in Bihar, Belan valley in

Uttar Pradesh and in several places of the Deccan. The important Neolithic sites excavated in south India are Maski, Brahmagiri, Hallur and Kodekal in Karnataka, Paiyampalli in Tamil Nadu and Utnur in Andhra Pradesh.

The chief characteristic features of the Neolithic culture are the practice of agriculture, domestication of animals, polishing of stone tools and the manufacture of pottery. In fact, the cultivation of plants and domestication of animals led to the emergence of village communities based on sedentary life.

There was a great improvement in technology of making tools and other equipments used by man. Stone tools were now polished. The polished axes were found to be more effective tools for hunting and cutting trees. Mud brick houses were built instead of grass huts. Wheels were used to make pottery. Pottery was used for cooking as well as storage of food grains. Large urns were used as coffins for the burial of the dead. There was also improvement in agriculture. Wheat, barely, rice, millet were cultivated in different areas at different points of time. Rice cultivation was extensive in eastern India. Domestication of sheep, goats and cattle was widely prevalent. Cattle were used for cultivation and for transport. The people of Neolithic Age used clothes made of cotton and wool.

Metal Age

The Neolithic period is followed by Chalcolithic (copper-stone) period when copper and bronze came to be used. The new technology of smelting metal ore and crafting metal artifacts is an important development in human civilization. But the use of stone tools was not given up. Some of the micro-lithic tools continued to be essential items. People began to travel for a long distance to obtain metal ores. This led to a network of Chalcolithic cultures and the Chalcolithic cultures were found in many parts of India.

Generally, Chalcolithic cultures had grown in river valleys. Most importantly, the Harappan culture is considered as a part of Chalcolithic culture. In South India the river valleys of the Godavari, Krishna, Tungabhadra, Pennar and Kaveri were settled by farming communities during this period. Although they were not using metals in the beginning of the Metal Age, there is evidence of copper and bronze artifacts by the end of second millennium B.C. Several bronze and copper objects, beads, terracotta figurines and pottery were found at Paiyampalli in Tamil Nadu.

The Chalcolithic age is followed by Iron Age. Iron is frequently referred to in the Vedas. The Iron Age of the southern peninsula is often related to Megalithic Burials. Megalith means Large Stone. The burial pits were covered with these stones. Such graves are extensively found in South India. Some of the important megalithic sites are Hallur and Maski in Karnataka, Nagarjunakonda in Andhra Pradesh and Adichchanallur in Tamil Nadu. Black and red pottery, iron artifacts such as hoes and sickles and small weapons were found in the burial pits.

The Harappan Civilization

The earliest excavations in the Indus valley were done at Harappa in the West Punjab and Mohenjodaro in Sind. Both places are now in Pakistan. The findings in these two cities brought to light a civilization. It was first called the 'The Indus Valley Civilization'. But this civilization was later named as the 'Indus Civilization' due to the discovery of more and more sites far away from the Indus valley. Also, it has come to be called the 'Harappan Civilization' after the name of its first discovered site.

Important Sites

Among the many other sites excavated, the most important are Kot Diji in Sind, Kalibangan in Rajasthan, Rupar in the Punjab,

