



Pre-history

Pre-history is the term used to refer to the periods of remote antiquity before the existence of written records. Some scholars believe that pre-history is virtually synonymous with the pre-historic archaeology. It is a branch of archaeology in which the principles and methods of the discipline have evolved without the need of texts, epigraphy or numismatics. The various stages of human progress towards becoming civilised can be broadly divided into the Palaeolithic Age, the Mesolithic Age, the Neolithic Age and the Metal Age. The Metal Age has been further divided into the Copper and Bronze Age, and the Iron Age. Historians have preferred to divide the history of human progress on the basis of stone and metal tools/implements technology.

THE PRE-HISTORIC PERIOD

THE PALAEOOLITHIC MAN

(APPROXIMATELY 500000-8000 BC)

In India, the earliest evidence of the existence of humans can be traced back to the Palaeolithic Age roughly between 500000 and 8000 BC. In many regions of South Asia, stone tools and cave paintings belonging to this period have been discovered. The word 'Palaeolithic' has been taken from two Greek words which mean 'old stone'. Chipped stones have been discovered in large numbers in various parts of India. These have been of hard rock called quartzite. Therefore, humans in Palaeolithic India are also called **Quartzite men**. Palaeolithic men did not know the use of fire and did not practise any form of agriculture. They led a savage life, using stone weapons for hunting.

They did not know about family life and lived in caves and wandered in jungles like other animals. According to historians, Palaeolithic men belonged to the Negrito race such as the modern people living on the Andaman Islands. They were short in stature and had dark skin, curly hair and flat noses.

Punjab Plains the Kashmir Valley

Until 1939, the evidence of three or four Stone Age cultures had been found in only a part of Punjab (now in Western Pakistan). These cultures have been called Pre-Sohan, Early-Sohan, Late-Sohan and

Evolved Sohan (named after Sohan, a tributary of the river Sindhu) and Flake and Blade industries.

Many studies have been conducted in the foothills of the south-western Himalayas. These include the Shivaliks and the Potwar Plateau. Potwar Plateau is a part of the ancient Pan Canada, drained by the Sindhu, districts of Sutlej and Beas. Rawalpindi and other modern districts of Western Punjab (now in Pakistan) lie in this region.

It is believed that the existence of human being in Punjab was noticed for the first time in Boulder Conglomerate which forms the top most surface in the Sindhu, Sohan and other rivers. It is suggested that during the Second Ice Age in the Kashmir Valley, the Potwar Plateau experienced heavy rains and the rivers carried away boulders which formed the Boulder Conglomerate. This formation had huge flakes of quartzite. Many of these were thought as artefacts, as they had traces of chipping on the sides.

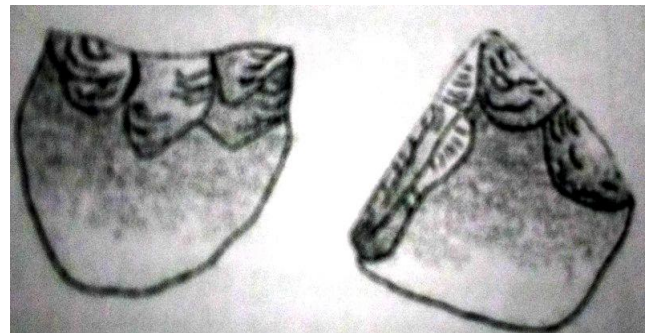
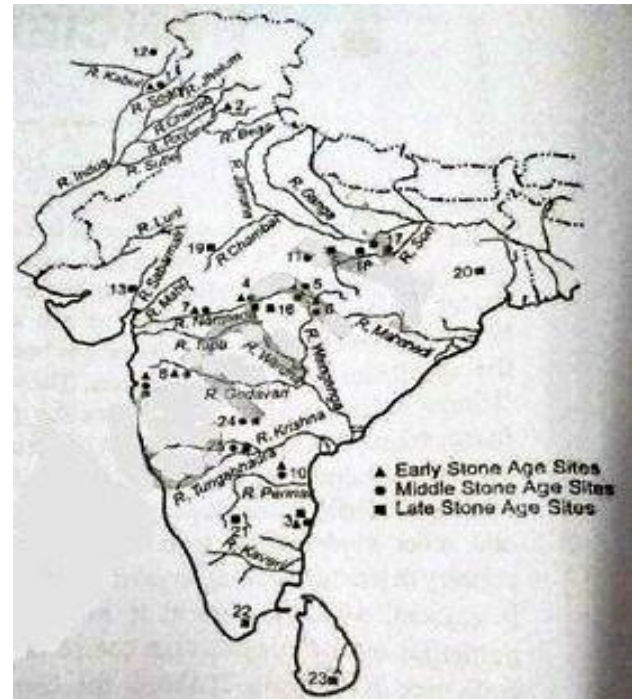


Fig 1.1 palaeolithic age (Not well shaped)

Peninsular India

The real home of the Handaxe Culture seems to be, according to the present knowledge, Peninsular India, the region towards the south of the Ganges Plains. Because the types of tools of this culture were first found near Chennai, it is also called the Chennai are Culture. This is purely a regional name which should, be given up, as the latest researches show that the Handaxe Culture covered almost the whole of the India—Andhra Pradesh, Chennai, Mysore, Maharashtra, Gujarat, eastern Rajasthan, the plateau regions of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal except Western Rajasthan, Sindh, Kashmir, Assam and the coastal strips of Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. The relics of the early Stone Age man are mainly confined to the middle reaches of the rivers, and to some distance, away from their basin. Altitudes, higher than 750 m and heavily forested regions were avoided by man. No early Stone Age tools have been found in Mount Abu (Rajasthan), Mahabaleshwar (Maharashtra), Nilgiris (Tamil Nadu) and Mysore (Karnataka), Hand axes and other associated tools were first found in the deposits of the Second Interglacial Age in Western Punjab, while in Peninsular India, they were found in the earliest pebble conglomerate bed in Narmada, which overlies the basal rock or laterite. In this conglomerate, are also found remains of extinct animals such as wild elephant, wild horse, and wild ox. Hippopotamus, *alaeindicus* F. and C., *Stegodon insignis* F. and C., *Rhinoceros unicornis* Lim., *Trionyx* species, *stegodon ganesa* F. and C., *Emys* species, *Ursus namadius* F. and C., *Leptobos frazerirut*, *Cravus duvancelli*.



MAP 1.1 Stone Age Sites of India

Latest studies conducted in the Mahi and Narmada basin show that this period could not be before early upper Pleistocene. The initial Stone Age tools in the peninsular region of India include different types of hand axes, cleavers, choppers and chopping tools prepared out of pebbles or pebble halves, and scrapers. Some of the tools are regular, having placed to help in holding, and some are two-ended and beaked tools. These types of tools could have been used only for cutting or engraving. Such tools were discovered in the regions of the Krishna Basin in Karnataka.

Assessment of Pre-history

We live in the geological period known as **Cenozoic**. It started nearly 65 million years ago when the landmasses on earth got the shape that we at present know. Before it, different landmasses or continents were almost united to constitute one large land mass termed Pangea. The historians have subdivided the Cenozoic period into two periods—Tertiary and Quaternary. The Tertiary period involves five epochs: (i) Palaeocene (65-56.5 million years ago); (ii) Eocene (56.5-35.4 million years ago); (iii) Oligocene (35.4-23.3 million years ago); (iv) Miocene (23.3-5.2 million years ago); (v) Pliocene (5.2-0.2 million years ago).

ago) and (v) Pliocene (5.2-1.64 million years ago). Primates started emerging nearly 70 million years ago at the start of the Cenozoic. Bipedalism started taking shape during the Miocene resulting into the rise of Australopithecus. The genus Homo emerged during the Pliocene. This was the time that Hominids started making tools. The Quaternary period witnessed a major development in tool technology. This period is further divided into two geological epochs: (i) Pleistocene (1.64 million—12,000 years ago) and (ii) Holocene (12,000 years ago to the present). We are now living in the Holocene geological epoch. The Palaeolithic Age of pre-history falls in the Pleistocene geological epoch. During the Pleistocene period, the temperature across the world fell considerably. This caused a series of ice ages. The last known ice age started nearly 118,000 years ago and was the most widespread. This ice age attained the greatest intensity about 20,000 years ago. The ice ages ended 12,000 years ago, with which began the Holocene (or postglacial) geological epoch. During the Pleistocene epoch, there started biological evolution of humans. They were now able to adapt themselves culturally. The temperatures in Europe, Asia and North Africa have dropped considerably because of the last ice age. Stone tool technology improved significantly in this period.

THE MESOLITHIC MAN (APPROXIMATELY 8000-4000 BC)

The biggest sign of the transformation of the Palaeolithic Age to the Mesolithic Age was the use of animal bones in the place of stones. The Mesolithic man began making use of special weapons, known as 'micro lithic' or 'pygmy tools'. These tools were made from jasper chalk or blood stone. He was still unaware of the use of fire and did not practice agriculture. However, he had made the dog his pet and also had begun using wooden handles for tools and weapons. The art of making pot of clay is also an important development of the Mesolithic Age. Man still led a nomadic life. However, he started the practice of burying the dead.

The microliths, themselves insignificant, present a great technological development—the introduction of compound tools. The tools were

universally" very small, sometimes barely an inch or half an inch long, and so could not be used otherwise. Economically, man was still savage, a hunter- fisher, a change was indicated in man's modus operandi by his toolkit and the materials of which it was made. However, in some areas as elsewhere in the world, there appeared the next great step—pottery making—with its concomitant of permanent habitation and food production.

Pre-history: Important Terms

Pre-history: It is the period for which we do not have any written records.

Proto-history: This is the period for which we have written records, but we are still unable to decipher the script.

Historic period: This is the period for which we have written records in the form of inscriptions and other texts.

Palaeography: It is the study of old writings used in inscriptions and other ancient records.

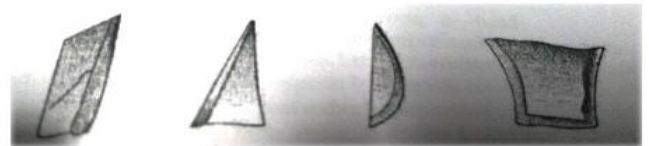
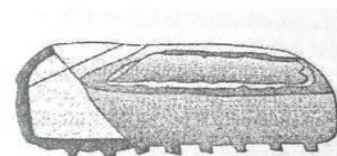


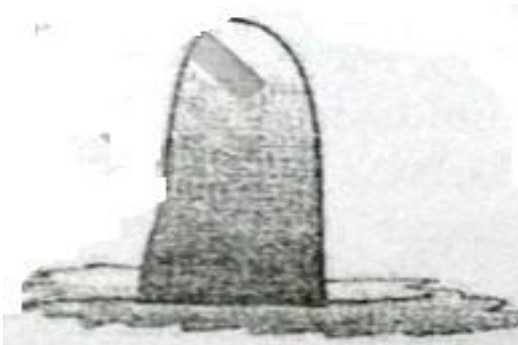
FIG. 1.2 Mesolithic Age (Shaped But not Polished).



Stone – Coffin or Sarcophagi Burial



Stone – Circle Pit - Burial



Menhir (Pit Marked with Stone)

FIG. 1.3 Megalithic Burial Types

In eastern India, microliths are generally found on the surface of laterite plains and in the forests in Orissa, Bengal and Chota Nagpur Plateau and on the rocky (sandstone) hillocks of Mirzapur. The few small scale excavations in these regions indicate their probable antiquity and the prevailing climatic conditions. Typologically, the microliths are non-geometric, that is, such forms as the triangle and trapeze were absent. The tools were generally made of milky quartz, though crystal, chert, chalcedony, quartzite and fossil wood of which large chunks have been found. Excavations at Birbanpur near Durgapur railway station on the bank of the Damodar River in Burdwan district (West Bengal) showed early microliths. The Kashmir Range, at the junction of Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh and small-scale excavations of open air sites and rock shelters at Morahana Pahar and Bhaghaikhor near Bhainsaur and Lekhania (near Mirzapur), yielded the first non-geometric microliths and later the geometric ones with an ill-baked ochre-red pottery. The later microliths include blades (retouched and simple), lames,

trapezes, triangular pieces, scrapers, points and a few burins. The occurrence of one ring stone or mace head of quartzite among heavy tools and two small ground or polished tools of chlorite schist at Langhnaj and Akhaj sites, in sandy alluvial plains of northern and central Gujarat, seem to be significant implying contact with or a knowledge of such tool making centres. Such tools suggest that either man had begun to cultivate with the help of a digging stick for which quartzite ring was used as a weight or the ring was used as a mace head- a powerful offensive weapon. Pottery, though extremely few and ill baked, is associated with later microliths, which further suggests that during this period, at least temporary camps or habitations were formed.

Later, people buried the dead in large, stone-lined pits and covered them with still large slabs, sometimes only one and deserve the name 'Megalithic', occupied the area. The dead were buried in highly crouched postures, preferably in north-south direction, very much like the characteristics of the Mediterranean and the Vedic racial groups. The presence of rhinoceros implies that the environment provided by lakes and the surrounding areas of scrub forests was congenial enough for such animals to flourish or that the rhinoceros lived on river banks, where they were hunted by man and their carcasses brought up to the mound. Fishing also provided food as the pieces of carapace of tortoise and fish vertebrae were found. The age of this culture is not yet determined. The Teris of South India, Birbanpur and pre-pottery and non-geometric levels in Mirzapur in eastern India represent early phases of this Age. The later phases at Mirzapur and other sites in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Langhnaj in northern Gujarat, where pottery occurs without any definite evidence of domestication of animals and incipient agriculture might represent the next stage.

THE NEOLITHIC MAN OR NEW STONE AGE (4000-1800 BC)

The next period is called the Neolithic Age. This term is also derived from two Greek words meaning 'new stone'. The significance of this name lies in the fact that in this age too, man had to depend solely on stone implements and was ignorant of any

metals, except gold. However, their implements were very different from those of the preceding stones other than quartzite and these were not merely chipped but were clean, bright, finished and shiny. Remains of Neolithic men are found almost every part of India including Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Bengal and Orissa to Maharashtra (as per recent political geography of India). By then, man was familiar with agriculture and was later and it

Cultivating wheat, barley, maize and many types of vegetables. The Neolithic man was not nomadic, but learnt to construct huts and also domesticate animals. He also, weaved cloth from wool and cotton. Special tombs called dolmen (consisting of three or more stone props in a circle supporting a massive roof stone) are dated to this age. Evidence of domestication of animals, adoption of agriculture, permanent village settlements and wheel turned pottery dating back to the middle of the sixth millennium BC has been found in the foothills of Sindh and Baluchistan (or Balochistan in the current Pakistani usage), both in the present day Pakistan. Neolithic settlements have also been found in the Kashmir valley at Burzahom and Gufkral. The people of Burzahom lived in pits and persisted on hunting and fishing economy. They made bone tools. Here, the evidence of domestic dogs buried with their master has been found. Piklihal in Andhra Pradesh is also an important Neolithic site.

The thread of the story interrupted at Langhnaj (northern Gujarat) may be picked up in Baluchistan (Pakistan). This is a transitional zone lying between the higher inland plateau of central Asia and the low flat plains of Sindh. Not only was the Quetta Valley extensively inhabited in the pre-historic times, but at a site like Kili Ghul Mohammad near Quetta, a cultural development is found. Here, four periods have been identified. During the earliest period dating back to approximately fourth millennium BC the people lived in mud brick houses, used chert and bone tools and domesticated sheep or goat. Some kind of crop production also existed. In the next period, hand-made, basket-impressed ware came into use. In the third period however, we see two distinctive elements which seem to form, along with the above mentioned chert tools, the diagnostic traits of the succeeding culture for a long time.

The people of the Stone Age suffered from one limitation. Because they had to depend entirely on weapons made of stone, they could not find settlements far away from the hilly areas. They could settle down only in the hilly river valleys.

THE METAL AGE (1800-1000 BC)

There was a very slow transition from the use of stone to the use of metal. People initially started using copper, gold, silver and at last iron. Initially, people valued gold and then copper and bronze, which are hard and also shiny. In Europe, the Neolithic Age was succeeded by the Bronze Age, but in India, there was no specific Bronze Age. In the northern parts of India, people changed to copper from stones for manufacturing axes, spears, heads and other objects. In India, the use of bronze began in the Copper Age. Therefore, we normally term this intermediate age as the Copper and Bronze age. The use of iron began much later, and it marked the beginning of the Iron Age in India. Hence, Metal Age in India can be divided into (i) the Copper and Bronze Age and (ii) the Iron Age.

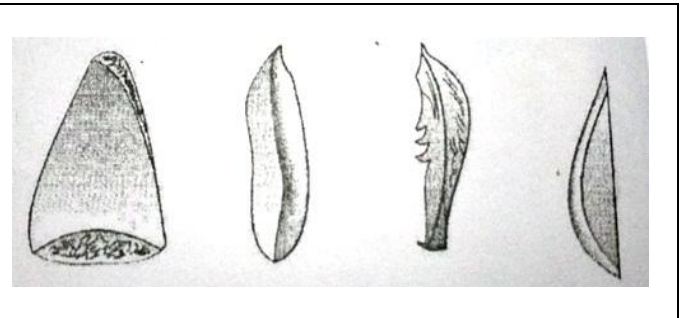
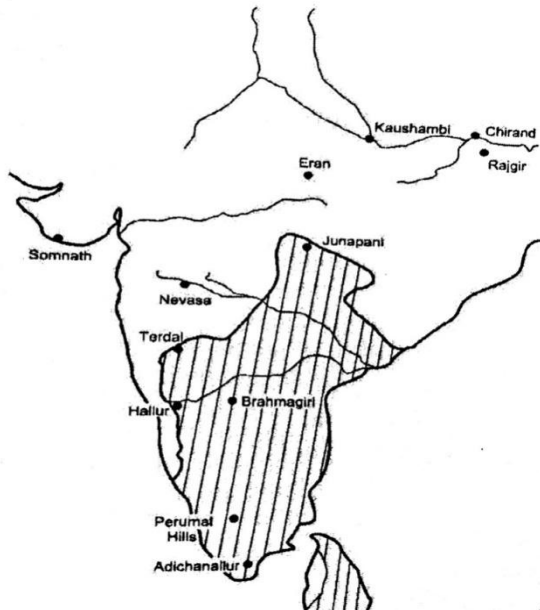


FIG 1.4 Neolithic Age (Well – Shaped, Sharp and Polished)



MAP 1.2 Megalithic Future Settlements (Early Iron Age)

It is very interesting to note that in the southern parts of India, there was no such intermediate Copper and Bronze Age between the Neolithic and the Iron Ages. The general features of the Neolithic period are the exclusive use of non-metal tools and the practice of agriculture with the development of village life. In India the period has not been properly studied and currently cannot be differentiated from the so-called chalcolithic period in which the use of stone was complemented by the use of copper or bronze. In the next phase, village economy continued on the old lines, but the great chalcolithic civilisations evolved out of it. The chalcolithic culture in India conventionally involved non-urban, non-Harappan culture which initially appeared at the turn of the second millennium BC and were finally replaced by iron using cultures.

There were three major chalcolithic cultures in India i.e., Banas culture (2000 to 1600 BC), Malwa culture (1900 to 1400 BC) and Jorwe culture (1500 to 900 BC). Besides these, the other cultures that were present during this period were Ahar culture (2800 to 1500 BC), Kaytha culture (2450 to 1700 BC), Savalda culture (2300 to 2000 BC), Prabhas Patan culture (2000 to 1400 BC) and Rangpur culture (1700 to 1400 BC).

The most prominent characteristic of these chalcolithic cultures is their distinct painted pottery. The red-slipped ware painted in designs of brown/chocolate colour (Kaytha culture); red-black-white designs (Ahar culture); coarser surface on which red or black designs are made (Malwa culture); lustrous red ware with glossy surface (Prabhas Patan and Rangpur culture) axe well-known pottery forms. There were other chalcolithic villages which could be differentiated from each other mainly on the basis of pottery and other artefacts such as terracotta and tools. Around the Baluchi Hills were four principal culture groups: (i) Zhob Valley culture, (ii) Quetta Valley culture, (iii) Nal culture and (iv) Kulli culture.

People during the chalcolithic constructed houses in rectangular and circular shapes. The houses were made of mud wattle and daub, were mostly in clusters. They did not know the use of burnt bricks. Floors in the houses were made of rammed clay anti roof of straw which were supported on bamboo and Wooden logs. People raised cattle and did farming of Kharif and Rabi crops in rotation. They used to stored food grains in huts. Nearly all these chalcolithic cultures developed in the black cotton soil zone in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra. The inhabitations of Kaytha culture were just a few in numbers, most of which were located on the banks of Chambal and its tributaries. Ahar culture inhabitations such as Balathal and Gilunds were among the largest. Excavations show that Balathal was a well-fortified inhabitation. There are adequate evidences that indicate that, the chalcolithic communities traded and exchanged goods with other contemporary communities.

Large inhabitations such as Ahar, Gilund, Nagada, Navadatoli, Eran, Prabhas Patan, Rangpur, Prakash, Daimabad and Inamgaon would have been major centres of trade and exchange. Religion was the common liking factor for all the chalcolithic cultures. All the cultures worshipped mother goddess and the bull. The worship of fire was a very extensive phenomenon among the chalcolithic people. Fire altars have been discovered from a great number of chalcolithic settlements. In South India, the dead were placed in east-west position. In Maharashtra, the dead bodies were buried in urns under the floor of their

houses in north-south direction. In Chandoti and Nevasa in Maharashtra, some children have been found buried in

Sanganakallu Excavation ★

Excavation at Sanganakallu, Kamataka (Bellary district) has provided evidence to show that in this region, microliths are of considerable antiquity, positively before the Neolithic or Polished Axe Culture or the beginning of agriculture. As the microlithic deposits underlie the Neolithic and overlie Palaeolithic, it is truly 'Mesolithic' as in Western Europe. Further, its association with a sticky black brown soil indicates climatic conditions when much more rain fell in the region, which is semi-arid today. Thus, a real transition between the pure food-collecting stage and the food-producing stage can now be postulated in several parts of India. However, any clear developmental history of the succeeding stage is not yet available from any one area. The picture has to be reconstructed or pieced together from scenes here and there.

Graves along with copper-bead necklaces. The Chalcolithic people made notable advancements in ceramic and metal technology. The painted pottery was efficiently made and baked in kilns at a temperature of 500-700°C. In the upper parts of Doab, Ochre Coloured Pottery (OCP) belonging to 2000 to 1800 BC has been excavated.

People were acquainted with copper, as copper-bead as well as a celt and few other objects have been found. Gold was perhaps the earliest discovery, but it was used as a material for ornaments only. The Iron Age concludes the pre-historical period. Several historians are of the opinion that the later part of the Iron Age extended up to the period when the Rig Veda was composed. This period saw a notable progress in the culture and civilisation in India. The exceptional discoveries in large quantities in ancient sites show that in South India, stone was directly followed by iron, while in North India axes, swords, spearheads, awl, daggers, etc., were first made in copper and afterwards with iron.

We see the use of iron starting in the north-western part of the Indian sub-continent at the start of

the first millennium BC. Iron objects used by the people can be categorised as: (i) Weapons used for warfare or hunting or fishing such as arrowheads, spearheads, daggers, lances and fish hooks; (ii) Household objects such as nails, pins, needles, knives, clamps, rings, bangles and tongs; (iii) Craft tools such as axe, chisel and borers; (iv) Agricultural tools such as spade, sickle, hoe, axes and ploughshare. However, till now, only a few iron tools associated with the first half of the first millennium have been unearthed, which show that at this stage, iron did not contribute adequately in the progress of handicraft and agriculture. In the initial stage in India, iron could not be used for production because of its scarcity. However, in this phase iron may have been used in warfare, for clearance, for making wheels and the body of carts and chariots and in the building of houses. Thus, it is evident that the period between 1025 and 500 BC was to a great extent an age of iron weapons and not iron tools.

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