



## The Earliest People



Early man was a hunter-gatherer. It means that he moved from place to place in search of food. He depended on nature for all his needs. Early man was also a nomad. He travelled great distances to find food. He fished, hunted for wild animals, and gathered berries, nuts, wild roots and fruits.

### WHY DID EARLY MAN MOVE FREQUENTLY?

There were many reasons for his moving from place to place.

- If he stayed at one place for a long time all the available food would have been eaten up.
- Animals move from place to place in search of grass and water. Early man, who was a hunter, had to follow their movements.
- Plants and trees bear fruits in different seasons. So, early man had to move in search of different fruits and other plant products.
- People, plants and animals need water to survive. All rivers are not perennial. People living on the banks of seasonal rivers had to go in search of water during the dry seasons.

It was not easy for early man to hunt. He needed special skills to hunt and gather food. To hunt he had to have proper tools and a quick and alert mind, and a knowledge of the animals they hunted.

To gather food he had to know which food to gather, which food to eat, and the knowledge of the season when he could gather a particular fruit or food. In short, he needed skills and knowledge.

Early man initially used tools such as sticks to dig up wild roots. Gradually, he started making tools out of stone. This led to the beginning of the Stone Age.

### THE STONE AGE

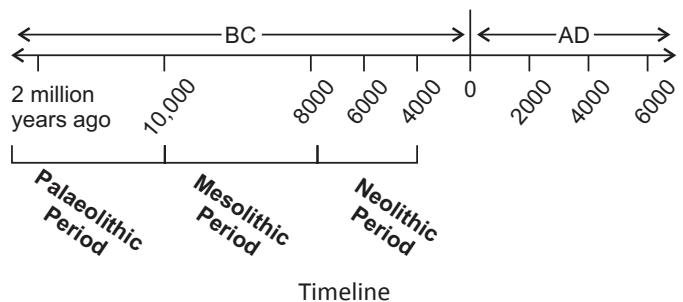
The Stone Age is divided into three periods:

- **Palaeolithic Period**
- **Mesolithic Period**
- **Neolithic Period**

**Palaeolithic Period :** The Palaeolithic period began about two million years ago and lasted till about 10,000 BC.

**Mesolithic Period :** The Mesolithic period lasted from 10,000 BC till 8000 BC.

**Neolithic Period :** The Neolithic period began around 8000 BC and lasted till about 4000 BC.



### THE PALAEOLITHIC PERIOD

The Palaeolithic period or the 'Old Stone Age' roughly began about two million years ago. During this period, man hunted and gathered food. He moved from place to place in search of food and wild animals. He ate whatever he could find. He did not wear anything in summers.

In winters he covered himself with animal skins and leaves to keep himself warm. As he was a wanderer he moved in search of food from place to place. He had no home. At night he slept on trees or hid in caves.



Early man hunting and gathering food

The Palaeolithic Period is further subdivided into Lower Palaeolithic period, Middle Palaeolithic period, and Upper Palaeolithic period.

### Lower Palaeolithic Period

During this period, most of the earth's surface was covered with thick sheets of ice. The climate was very cold. This period was also called the 'Ice Age' or 'Pleistocene Period'. Hand axes were the commonest tools used by early man during this age.

### Middle Palaeolithic Period

The tools used during the Middle Palaeolithic Period were scrapers and borers made of stone flakes. Needles were used to sew furs and skins for body coverings.

### Upper Palaeolithic Period

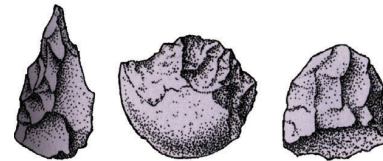
During the Upper Palaeolithic Period, the climate became slightly warmer. Tools such as flint, blades and projectile points were used for hunting and skinning wild animals.

### Use of Tools

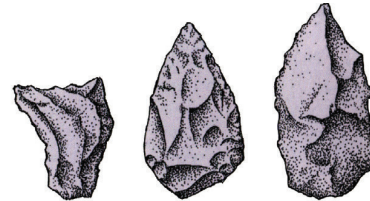
Tools were used by early man for different purposes.

- They were used as weapons for hunting wild animals.
- They were used for shaping or cutting materials.
- They were used for digging the ground for cutting edible roots.

- They provided a sense of security and protection from wild beasts and enemies.



Olduvan tools



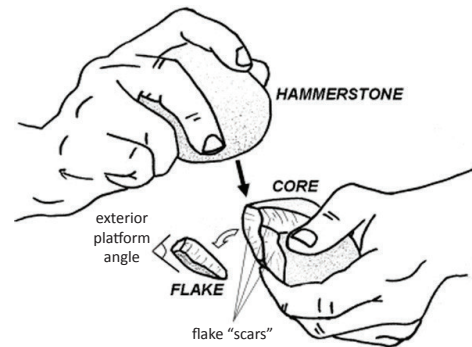
Acheulian tools

Early stone implements from the Olduvan and Acheulian cultures.

### Techniques of Tool Making :

- **Stone on Stone**

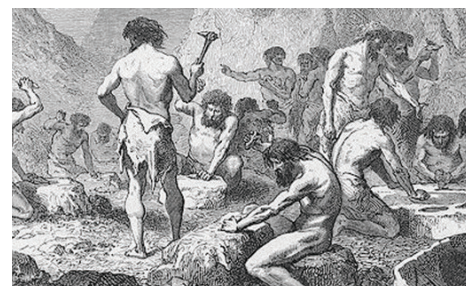
Take two stones and hold them in each hand. Use one as a hammer and the other as a core to be shaped as a tool. Strike off flakes from the core with the hammer stone in order to get the required shape.



Stone on Stone

- **Pressure Flaking**

Place the core on a hard surface. Use the hammer stone to remove flakes from a piece of bone or stone placed on the core.



Pressure flaking



### Did you know?

Several human habitats dating back to the Stone Age have been discovered in different parts of the earth:

- A tent-like structure found inside a cave near Nice, France.
- Many huts made of bones were found in Eastern Europe and Siberia.
- Megalithic tombs built during the Neolithic Age have been discovered all across Europe and Asia.



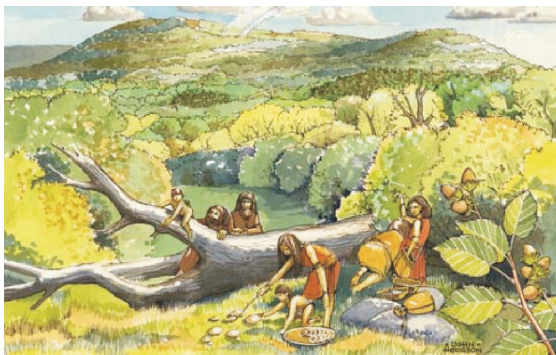
Cave paintings from the Mesolithic Period

### MESOLITHIC PERIOD

Mesolithic Period or the Middle Stone Age was the period in history that existed between the Palaeolithic Period and the Neolithic Period. Mesolithic People used tools made of bones, antler and wood for hunting, fishing and gathering food. Later, they used tools formed from chips like blades, points, borers and scrapers known as microliths.



Microliths



Late Mesolithic Period

The people living during the Mesolithic Period were hunter-gatherers. Gradually, towards the end of this period, they moved on from being food gatherers to food growers. They experimented with seeds by dropping them on the ground and seeing them grow. They realised that by growing plants they received food in sufficient quantity. They made attempts to domesticate animals like goats, sheep and cattle which provided them with milk and food.

### NEOLITHIC PERIOD

The Neolithic Period began around 8000 BC and lasted till about 4000 BC. The Neolithic people learnt to make more polished tools. One of the major developments of this period was the adoption of agriculture. They moved to larger settlements and realised the importance of domestic animals like dogs, sheep and cattle. They used them as means of transport and for providing them with milk and meat.



Neolithic tools

## UNDERSTANDING STONE AGE SITES

Many sites have been discovered near rivers, lakes, springs etc. Sites are places where material remains of the past are found. They can be in the form of buried towns, cities, tools, toys, pots etc. The Stone Age sites of early man include : habitation sites, factory sites and habitation cum factory sites.

- Habitation sites were places occupied by food gatherers for a short period of time. Such sites provided shelter from rain, thunder and lightning.
- Factory sites were places where early man found stones for manufacture of stone tools.
- Habitation cum factory sites were places where food gatherers lived together for a longer period of time.

## DISCOVERY OF FIRE

The most important discovery of early man was the discovery of fire. Perhaps early man discovered fire by chance, when he would have rubbed two stones together.

- Fire changed his life completely.
- Fire kept him warm.
- Fire kept wild animals away.
- Meat tasted better when cooked in fire.
- Fire gave them light.

Traces of ash have been found in the Kurnool caves of Andhra Pradesh.

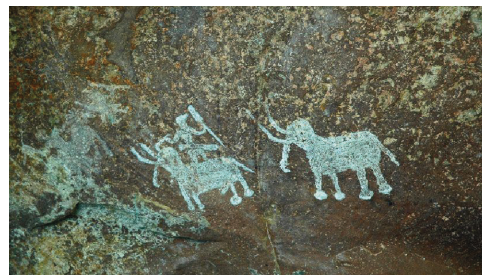


The discovery of the use of fire

## ROCK PAINTINGS

Cave or rock paintings are paintings depicted on the walls of rocks or caves. The rock paintings belong to various periods of time from the Upper Palaeolithic to the neolithic periods. The scenes generally depict hunting, dancing and animal fights. Animals such as bison, tiger, elephants, monkeys, lizards, peacocks are the dominant subject of these paintings. The colours used are mainly in red and white with occasional use of green and yellow.

Rock paintings have been found near the river on rocks and caves. The style of the painting suggests it could be 20,000–30,000 years old. The Naldah, Gararda, Golpur rock paintings sites are the best sites discovered so far. Rock painting sites have also been discovered in the rural areas of Bundi. But the largest and the most spectacular one is located in the Vindhya Hills at Bhimbetka in Madhya Pradesh.



Cave painting at Bhimbetka

The paintings were done primarily with a finger with just two or three strokes.

Historians suggest that prehistoric man must have also used feathers, wooden sticks and needles of porcupines for different styles and texture.



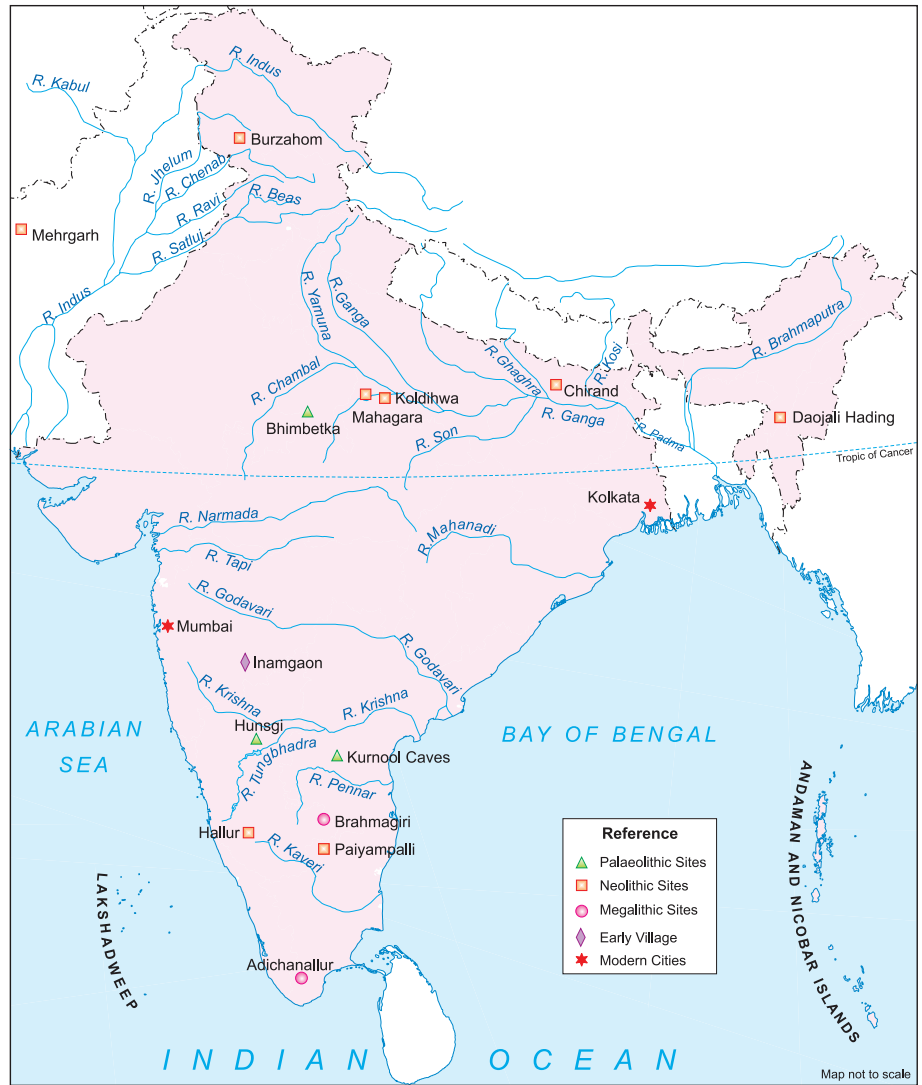
Rock shelters of Bhimbetka



The paintings depict children running, jumping and playing. Scenes of men, women and children seem to show a sort of family life. Some paintings even show scenes of people gathering fruit or honey from trees and of women grinding and preparing food. One of the amazing things about some paintings at Bhimbetka is that as many as 20 layers of paintings have been painted one on top of the other. The hunting scenes must have been connected with some sort of ritual in the hope that it would lead to a successful hunt.

### RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

It seems the early people had no systematic or specific religious beliefs. But they worshipped various forces of nature like the sun, the moon, stars, as well as some wild animals. They were afraid of storm, thunder and lightning and took them as expression of divine anger. Probably they also worshipped their ancestors and buried the dead with all the belongings to be used in the next world. They also believed in magical powers, charms and spells.



Map 2 : Some Important Archaeological Sites

### Case Study – 1

#### Hunsgi Valley

The Hunsgi and Bachbal valley in the Deccan has many Stone Age sites. Recent excavations in Hunsgi Valley have focussed on the Isampur quarry, a site that has 15,000 stone tools. They were probably used for different activities like hunting, carving, and cutting wood on stones. Many tools were made of limestone. Dated between 500,000-20,000 years ago, Hunsgi was most probably a Stone Age factory site.



Stone tools at Isampur Quarry

## Case Study – 2

### Palaeolithic Cave at Lascaux

The Lascaux cave in France was discovered on 12 September, 1940 by four children. The cave contains 2,000 figures. Many of them depict pictures of animals such as bulls, bisons and horses. There are also many geometric figures. Other images include pictures of a bird, a bear, a rhinoceros and a human. There are no images of reindeer even though that was the main food of that period. The paintings, drawings and engravings give an insight into the lifestyle of the early people. The paintings were made with natural colour pigments crushed from rocks or plants.

By 1955, the paintings had been damaged to a great extent by the flow of 1,200 visitors who visited the cave everyday. It was opened after World War II. The cave was, however, closed to the public in 1963.



Cave painting at Lascaux

### Points to Remember

- Early man was a hunter-gatherer. He moved from place to place in search of food.
- The discovery of fire changed the life of early man completely. Fire kept him warm. Cooked food tasted better.
- Mesolithic people used tools like blades, points, borers and scrapers known as microliths.
- The most spectacular rock painting is located in Bhimbetka in Madhya Pradesh.

### Glossary

<b>MESOLITHIC</b>	: The Middle Stone Age when men started making advanced stone tools.
<b>NEOLITHIC</b>	: The New Stone Age when men began to grow plants and domesticate animals.
<b>NOMAD</b>	: One who moves from place to place in search of food.
<b>PALAEOLITHIC</b>	: The Old Stone Age when men used only stone tools and were food gatherers.
<b>SITES</b>	: Places where material remains of the past are found.

### TIME TO LEARN

#### A. Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)

1. During the Stone Age early people used tools and weapons made of  
(a) copper                      (b) stone                      (c) iron                      (d) wood
2. What is the approximate period of Neolithic Age in India?  
(a) 15,000 BC – 4,000 BC                      (b) 10,000 BC – 8,000 BC  
(c) 8,000 BC – 4,000 BC                      (d) 4,000 BC – 3,000 BC
3. During which age early people used tools known as **Microliths**?  
(a) Palaeolithic Period    (b) Mesolithic Period    (c) Neolithic Period    (d) All of these
4. The largest and the most spectacular cave paintings have been found at which place?  
(a) Naldah                      (b) Gararda                      (c) Golpur                      (d) Bhimbetka
5. Traces of ash left by early man have been found in which caves?  
(a) Bhimbetka                      (b) Kurnool                      (c) Golpur                      (d) All of these
6. Hunsgi valley is famous for  
(a) Stone Age sites                      (b) Indus valley sites                      (c) Vedic sites                      (d) None of these

**B. State whether the following statements are True or False.**

1. A nomad leads a settled life.
2. Discovery of fire made life difficult for the Stone Age people.
3. Rock paintings are depicted on the floor of caves.
4. Stone tools were used only as weapons of defence.
5. Kurnool caves are in Madhya Pradesh.


**C. Very short answer type questions**

1. Name the periods in which the Stone Age is divided.
2. When did the Mesolithic period begin and end in India?
3. What was the most important discovery of early man?
4. Why is Bhimbetka famous?

**D. Short answer type questions**

1. How did the Stone Age people get food?
2. How did the early man discover fire?
3. Describe the main features of cave paintings of Stone Age people.

**E. Long answer type questions**

1. Bring out the main features of the Neolithic Age.
2. Differentiate between the Palaeolithic period and the Mesolithic Period.
3. How did the discovery of fire change the life of early man?
4. What do you know about the religious beliefs of early man?

[Value Based Question]

**F. Activity**

**Plan a prehistoric picnic**

Select a picnic spot in a forest/ zoo/ island. Best places will be near the bank of a river or lake or sea.

You are not to carry and food or articles. You have to collect fruits, find stones and wood. You can also fish.

**G. Assignment**

Imagine you are a Stone Age person living in a cave in a forest. You want to draw cave paintings.

How will you do it? Where will you find colours. What will be your theme of painting?

**LIFE SKILLS**

The history of Stone Age is the story of man's struggle against nature. The early man gradually learnt to overpower and dominate nature. How did he do it? What was the significance of discovery of fire and invention of wheel? Is man's struggle against nature an eternal process that is continuing even today?

Read and find out.