



Chapter

# 2



# The Earliest Societies



In this chapter you will learn about :

- ➊ Stone Age
- ➋ Palaeolithic Age
- ➌ Mesolithic Age



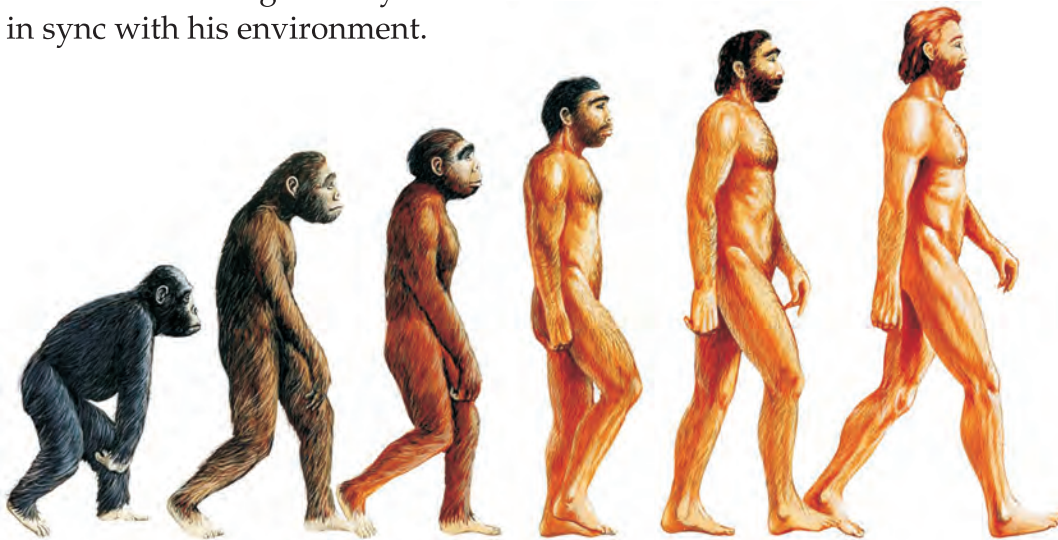
Our earth is much older than the life on it. Animals, plants and men appeared on the earth much later. Early men passed through many stages of **evolution** before they transformed from their stooping ape-like appearance to the present state and posture. Life began on the earth about 3,500 millions ago. Modern humans probably evolved between 2,00,000 and 1,00,000 years ago.

Man has evolved through millions of years. Early man lived a primitive life of hardships and struggles.

The primitive man did not live a life like the man in modern times. It was gradually that he learnt to live in sync with his environment.

An important change in him was his ability to balance himself on his feet. He could stand and walk straight. His hands were free to pick up and throw things. The thumb too evolved and it could move in a direction opposite to other fingers and even closer. This gave him the advantage of holding objects better than the **hominids** or any other creature. Gradually, the size of the brain increased.

He learnt to adapt himself to his surroundings. In this process, he learnt to use stones to kill the prey, for crushing nuts and so on. Further, he learnt to use stones for making tools and weapons according to his needs.



Different stages of human evolution



## Stone Age

Early humans made tools of stones as they were easily available in their surroundings.

Archaeological discoveries have made it clear that this prehistoric hunter-gatherer learnt to use stones, wood and bones for various purposes as these were easily available. He discovered that the sharp-edged stones were useful in cutting and chopping wood and meat; and the rounded stones were good for crushing and grinding things. Based on the uses of stones and tools made with them, the **Stone Age** can be divided into four periods : **Palaeolithic Age** or Old Stone Age, **Mesolithic Age** or Middle Stone Age, **Neolithic Age** or New Stone Age and Chalcolithic Age.

## Palaeolithic Age

The word 'Palaeolithic' has come from two Greek words– **palaeo** and **lithos**, meaning 'old' and 'stone' respectively.

Palaeolithic Age is also known as the **Old Stone Age**. This vast period has been divided by historians into Lower, Middle and Upper Palaeolithic Ages. The climate was cold in this age.

Throughout the Palaeolithic Age, the early humans led a nomadic life. They were food gatherers and hunters. They ate raw meat, wild fruits and vegetables. They used animals' skin, barks and leaves of trees to keep themselves warm during the winter season.

## Tools

At the first stage, pieces of stones were used as tools. Later, different types of crude stone tools were made. Flint, a type of stone, was widely used to make tools and weapons as it could be easily shaped into different forms.



The Palaeolithic stone tools discovered at the various sites are of different shapes and sizes with crude design

## Techniques of Tools Making

The early humans applied two major techniques to make tools. The first technique of tool making applied by the Early Stone Age people is termed as the stone on stone technique. In this technique, the pebble selected to be converted into a tool was held in one hand. Then, another piece of stone, serving as a sort of hammer, was held in the other hand. This stone was used to chisel the pebble into a tool. The second major technique has been termed as pressure flaking. In this technique, the piece of stone from which the tool was to be made was placed on a surface. The hammer stone was used on another piece of stone placed on the core and flakes were removed from it. Thus, the core could be given different shapes.

Both large and small pieces of stones were used to make tools and weapons. Axe-heads, hammers and choppers were made from larger stone pieces. Knives and scrapers were made from smaller pieces of stone. Some stones were given a sharp point and tied to arrows and spears. They were very helpful in hunting animals from a distance.

Remains of bones, horns and tusks of animals such as the wild ox and elephant, some with weapons embedded in them, suggest that these animals were used to hunting. Pits were sometimes dug and covered with leaves and twigs to trap large animals.

While rubbing two pieces of stones or wood together, they might have accidentally discovered how to light a fire. Fire was a major discovery of this age.

Early humans kept a fire burning at the entrance of their caves to prevent the wild animals. Gradually, the practice of eating cooked food was started.



Discovery of fire changed the life of the early humans



## Major Palaeolithic Sites

The places where archaeologists discover tools, implements and other artefacts of historical importance are called **sites**.



### You must know

The Stonehenge is Europe's most famous prehistoric building. It is at least 5000 years old and consists of four concentric rings of stones. It is a mystery how such heavy stones were put in there. Some historians believe that it was built for ritual purposes.

Historical sites have been found on the earth's surface, under the earth and even under water on some occasions. A number of such sites, associated with the Palaeolithic Age, have been discovered across the Indian subcontinent. Most of these sites are located near large water bodies. Another striking feature of these sites is that they are located in areas where stones are available in plenty.

Places where stone tools have been found are known as **factory sites**. As Palaeolithic people led a nomadic life, they might not have stayed there for long. However, there are some sites where they might have lived for a longer period. This is evident from the types of artefacts found there, which include not only stone tools but also the objects and structures they used for other purposes. Such sites are called **habitation-cum-factory sites**. Most of these sites are associated with the Palaeolithic people are rock shelters and caves. People might have chosen these places for the purposes of habitation because they could protect them from heat, rain, wind and wild animals. Most of the rock shelters and caves have been found near the Vindhyas and in the Deccan plateau region lying close to the Narmada Valley.

Some important Palaeolithic sites in India include Mirzapur (Uttar Pradesh), Bhimbetka (Madhya Pradesh), Pune, Chikri-Nevasa, Bori (Maharashtra), Kurnool (Andhra Pradesh) and Hunsgi (Karnataka).



### You must know

The tools in the Palaeolithic Age were usually made of hard rock 'quartzite'. Therefore, Palaeolithic man in India is also called 'Quartzite Man'.

### Case Study : Hunsgi (South India)

Hunsgi in Karnataka is situated in the Shorapur Doab, the land between the river Krishna and its tributary Bhima. A number of Palaeolithic sites have been discovered here. Archaeologists have found a large number of tools used by Palaeolithic people.

The region has several springs which possibly supplied water. During the dry season, people camped near water sources and hunted large animals that came for a drink. They spread out over the region during the wet season and depended more on edible plants and small prey.

The artefacts found at Hunsgi tools which were mostly made of limestone.

## Mesolithic Age (12,000 to 10,000 yrs)

In this age, the climate became relatively warm. It marked the beginning of the Mesolithic or Middle Stone Age.

The term 'Meso' means 'middle' and 'litho' means 'stone'. Thus, it means the middle stone age. The Mesolithic Age or the Middle Stone Age lasted for a comparatively short period of time. The warm climate led to an increase in the variety of plants and animals; hunting and gathering food become easier.



**Microliths : Mesolithic tools and implements**

Mesolithic man also practiced hunting, fishing and food gathering techniques. During the Mesolithic period, people began to make different types of tools called **microliths**. These were smaller, sharper and more efficient than





the Palaeolithic tools. Scrapers, borers, hammers, sickles and arrow heads were made and used as tools. The bow and arrow were used and made it easy to hunt fast-moving animals. Hooks and baits improved fishing. Microliths have been found at Adamgarh (Madhya Pradesh) and Bagor (Rajasthan).

## Domestication of Plants and Animals

Domestication began in the Mesolithic Age. The characteristics of this period were hunting and fishing settlements along rivers and on lake shores, where fish and other aquatic creatures were abundant.

Mesolithic humans discovered the food value of the seeds. They began to gather these for food. Seeds that fell at the time of gathering might have sprouted suggesting the magic-link between seeds and plants. Later, they might have experimented by dropping seeds into the soil and found plants growing. The first crops were barley and wheat.

Man learnt to tame some gentle animals such as wild dog, cow, goat, etc and used them for his own benefits.



### You must know

The Azilian culture, which was centered in the Pyrenees region but spread to Switzerland, Belgium and Scotland, was one of the earliest representative of Mesolithic culture in Europe.

Polished stone was another innovation that occurred in the Mesolithic Age.

## The First Houses

In the Mesolithic Age man made their own primitive houses. They were usually built in river valleys. This provided them with plenty of water and fertile soil for growing crops.

Remains of human burials have been found at some Mesolithic sites. The dead were buried along with offerings such as food and ornaments.

## Rock Paintings

One of the most important sources about the early humans are the rock paintings of the Stone Age found around the world. At the rock shelters of Bhimbetka, located in Madhya Pradesh, more than 500 paintings by Paleolithic and Mesolithic humans have been found. These caves have been listed as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO.

In most of these paintings, animals have been shown separately, as part of hunting scenes or running after hunters. Birds, fish, lizards, crabs, frogs and scorpions have also been drawn. Some paintings also show men and women. Red and white were the most widely used colours.



Rock painting at Bhimbetka



### Terminology

- evolution** : process of development over a long period of time
- hominid** : an ape-like creature from whom humans developed
- microlith** : tiny stone tools



## Recap

- ❖ Humans being evolved from the hominids who looked like an ape.
- ❖ Humans learnt to make many things from stone.
- ❖ The early age of human development is known as Stone Age.
- ❖ The Stone Age is divided into four periods.
- ❖ The four periods of the stone age are : Palaeolithic Age, Mesolithic Age, Neolithic Age and Chalcolithic Age.
- ❖ Axe-heads, hammers, choppers, knives, scrappers, etc were the tools of Palaeolithic Age.
- ❖ Some important palaeolithic sites in India are Mirzapur, Bhimbetka, Pune, Bosi, Kurnool and Hunsgi.
- ❖ People started to domesticate animals like dog, goat, cow, etc in the Mesolithic Age.
- ❖ In the Mesolithic Age, man made their own primitive houses.
- ❖ The main occupation of man of both the ages were hunting, fishing and food gathering.

## Evaluation Time

### Objective Type Questions

#### A. Tick (✓) the correct option :

1. The Stone Age is divided into \_\_\_\_\_ periods :  
(a) one  (b) two  (c) three  (d) four
2. The word 'Palaeo' means :  
(a) stone  (b) old  (c) middle  (d) copper
3. The Palaeolithic Age :  
(a) 2,00,000-12,000  (b) 2,00,000-11,000  (c) 2,00,000-10,000  (d) 2,00,000-9,000
4. Mesolithic Age :  
(a) 12,000-10,000  (b) 12,000-9,000  (c) 12,000-8,000  (d) 12,000-7,000
5. Stone tools were called :  
(a) microliths  (b) monoliths  (c) miniliths  (d) none of these

#### B. Fill in the blanks :

1. The Palaeolithic Age is also known as \_\_\_\_\_.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ were made from smaller pieces of stones.
3. Places where stone tools have been found are known as \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Mesolithic man practiced \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Remains of human \_\_\_\_\_ have been found at some Mesolithic sites.



### C. State true or false :

1. Early men used skin, bark and leaves of trees to keep themselves warm during the winter season.
2. Both large and small pieces of stones were used to make tools and weapons.
3. Hunsgi has a few springs which possibly supplied water very less.
4. Microliths have been found at Adamgarh and Bagor.
5. The Bhimbetka caves have been listed as World Heritage Site by UNESCO.

### Subjective Type Questions

#### D. Very short answer type questions :

1. Mention some palaeolithic sites.
2. Name the tools used by paleolithic man.
3. What is a flint?
4. What are microliths?
5. Which animals did the Mesolithic man domesticated?

#### E. Short answer type questions :

1. Write a short note on Palaeolithic Age.
2. How did fire help the Palaeolithic Man?
3. What are the major sites of the Paleolithic Age?
4. Describe the tools of the Mesolithic Age.
5. What are the rock paintings?

#### F. Long answer type questions :

1. Describe the Palaeolithic Age.
2. How did the Mesolithic Age differ from the Palaeolithic Age?
3. Describe the domestication of plants and animals in the Mesolithic Age.



#### To Do Hour

Collect some stones and try to use them as tools. Observe which stones can be used as tools.



#### Net Check

Browse the internet and gather more about the Bhimbetka cave paintings.

<http://www.indiatales.com> > [rock-paintings-of-bhimbatka](#)



#### Think and Answer

Why did early human settle near water sources?

