



Chapter

3

Neolithic Farmers and Herders



In this chapter you will learn about :

- ➊ Neolithic Age
- ➋ Tools
- ➌ Settled Life
- ➍ Domestication of Animals
- ➎ Pottery
- ➏ Chalcolithic Age



Humans discovered farming towards the end of the Stone Age. It brought a great change in the lifestyle of man. For the first time, people settled down to live at one place.

The Mesolithic Age was followed by the Neolithic Age. Life changed completely in this age.

Neolithic Age (6000-4000 BCE)

The term 'Neolithic' has been derived from two Greek words : 'neo' meaning 'new' and 'lithos' meaning 'stones'. It is the last stage of the Stone Age. Progress began to show, as humans started leading a settled community life.

This period marked complete transformation of the early humans from hunters and food gatherers to farmers and food producers. Practice of farming and domestication of animals were the major factors that accounted for this transformation.

Agriculture/Farming

Farming began on an extensive scale during the Neolithic Age. Wheat and barley were the first cereals grown in the Neolithic Age.

Having learnt the practice of farming, people began to lead a settled life. They were able to

produce their own food. Regular and extensive practice of farming made it necessary for the Neolithic people to lead a sedentary or settled life. It was only after settling down at a certain place and staying there for a long period that they could plough the soil, sow seeds, grow crops and harvest them.

They used to live close to rivers, lakes, etc. At these places, water was available regularly and in large quantity, for irrigation and other purposes.

Domestication of Animals

The Neolithic humans began to domesticate animals on a large scale. Dog, goat, cattle, pig, sheep, horse and donkeys were the most important domesticated animals. Goats and cattle provided milk and sheep provided wool. The horse and the donkey were used to carry burden.



A Neolithic farmland and settlement lying close to the farm



Archaeological evidences found at sites such as Mehrgarh suggest that dogs, cattle, sheep and goats were domesticated for different purposes. At Tekkalkota (Karnataka), bones of sheep and goats have been found.

Though people had started leading settled life, they would often travel from one place to another in search of pastures where they could feed their cattle.

Tools

During the Neolithic Age, people began to produce polished and fine cutting tools. These tools were much sharper than those used in the Mesolithic period.

People used tools such as axes, ploughs, sickles and hoes to clear forests and harvest the crops. They used a kind of rounded stone to grind grain. They also made spindles and home needles.



Neolithic tools

Some of the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic tools continued to be used during the Neolithic Age. Microliths were used in spears and arrows. These were made of basalt and flint tied to a piece of wood or bone for a firm grip.

At sites such as Burzahom and Gulfkral in Jammu and Kashmir, stone axes have been found in large number. Besides, stone blades, stone celts, chisels, etc have also been found in the Deccan, North-East and Chota Nagpur Plateau.

Pottery

As people began to grow grains, they needed containers to store their plant produce. At first, they stored the grains in pits or **trenches**. Then they wove baskets out of wild grass and applied wet clay around them and dried them in the sun.

These baskets were good for storing dry grains

but not for storing milk or water. In due course, they learnt to make small mud pots with their hands and baked them in fire.

After the invention of the potter's wheel, dry grains, cooked food and liquid food were stored in large baked pots. Some of these pots were used for cooking food as well. With the passage of time, they began to paint them with different colours and patterns.



Neolithic clay pot

Invention of the Wheel

The wheel was a remarkable invention of the Neolithic humans. It is possible that a log or a stone rolling downwards sparked off the idea of the wheel. In the beginning, the Neolithic people might have placed logs of woods beneath heavy objects in order to make them move easily. Subsequently, they might have started the practice of loading anything heavy on a sledge, as it would be convenient to drag.

They might have noticed that the edges of the sledge caused an indentation of the log surface.

So, they might have cut the wood between the two marks of such indentation on logs of woods. Subsequently, they might have invented the cart by improving upon this technique.

The wheel and the cart made life easier. People could now travel from one place to another much faster than before. He could also easily transport heavy objects. The potter's wheel also came to be used that improved the process of making pots. Perhaps, the wheel was also used in spinning thread, which led to weaving.



Invention of the wheel was among the most revolutionary breakthrough of the Neolithic Age.

Settled Life

With the advent of agriculture, man settled down permanently and began to live in villages.



A Neolithic village consisted of a few closely build houses surrounded by a common fence. The concept of family became popular for the first time during this age. They were closely related, shared the same costumes, beliefs and methods of worship. A group of families came to be called a **tribe**.

Religious Beliefs

As the force of nature like water, fire, rain, thunder, earth, moon, stars and the sun frightened the Neolithic man, he started worshipping them. He even worshipped the cow so as to thank her for providing many things, and the snake, because he feared its venom.

Megaliths

The Neolithic people performed the practice of burying their dead. Huge rectangular blocks of stone marked the burial places in the Neolithic period. These are called **Megaliths** ('mega' means 'large').

The dead were buried along with many objects that they used during their lifetime. This shows that the Neolithic man believed in life after death. Cremation was also practiced.



Megaliths

Neolithic Settlements

Neolithic settlements have been found particularly in the north-west and the north-east of India. A few have also been found in South India. Some of these Neolithic settlements

include **Mehrgarh** and **Killi Ghul Mohammad** in Baluchistan, **Burzahom** and **Gulfkral** in Kashmir, **Mahagara** in Uttar Pradesh, **Chirand** near Patna in Bihar and **Sarutaru** in Assam.

Houses

Neolithic man needed a safe and comfortable house which could protect him from the fury of nature and wild beasts.

In the beginning, houses were built with straw. Gradually, people began using timber and grass, as they were easily available around their habitat. In some places, they built small huts of mud and reeds.



Neolithic sites in Indian subcontinent

Extended Use of Fire

Now, in the New Stone Age, he learnt to use fire in a wider way. He could heat earthenware to a certain degree in order to make them strong and harder. He learnt to make small fire in an earthen bowl too.



Differences Between Palaeolithic

Age and Neolithic Age

	Palaeolithic Age	Neolithic Age
1.	Man only chased and killed animals for their meat or for his own safety.	Man tamed and domesticated animals.
2.	Man clothed himself with animal skin and the bark of trees.	Man wove clothes and started using wool and cotton to cover himself.
3.	Man did not know how to make pottery.	Pottery-making was a significant feature of this age.
4.	Man was a scavenger, hunter and food-gatherer.	Man began producing food.
5.	Man lived in caves and wandered around to different places for food.	Man build huts and mud houses and started looking after the grain sown.

Chalcolithic Age (4000-3000 BCE)

In the Chalcolithic Age, people began to use both stone and copper tools. Chalcolithic Age is also known as the **Copper-Stone Age**. This period was short but of great importance. Copper was the first metal to be discovered. Copper tools were better than tools made from stone. In course of time, copper began to be mixed with other metals to form stronger metals.

Social Life

Early humans lived in groups. Each group consisted of men, women, children and domesticated animals. The concept of private property was not popular. Everything belonged to group. Simple **division of labour** existed within the group. Each group had a leader.

Gradually, the idea of private property emerged. Besides hunting and food-gathering, people had many other duties to perform. Hence the division of labour become more organised. Some cultivated the fields, some had to look after the animals and some were given the task of making different tools.

Life became more comfortable for the early man. He started living at one place. He began to produce more food and exchange his things with other groups. Later, he constructed mud huts. Ornaments of shell and bone appeared. Generally, the ornaments were made by women. The clothes also underwent a change. Men began to use clothes made from cotton.

Religious Life

The early man was afraid of natural calamities. As he was ignorant of the causes of lightning and thunder, earthquakes and weather changes, he worshipped the sky, the Sun, rain and other objects of nature.

Case Study : Some Major Neolithic Sites

Mehrgarh (North-West) : Mehrgarh is located in a fertile plain, near the Bolan Pass, which is one of the most important routes linking India and Iran. Mehrgarh was one of the places where women and men learnt to grow crops such as barley, wheat and cotton; and to rear cattle, sheep, goats and buffaloes.



Findings from Mehrgarh

The houses of Mehrgarh were square and rectangular in shape. They were made of mud and mud bricks. Each house had several rooms, some of which may have been used for storage.

At Mehrgarh, microliths and bone tools have been found. Stones and slabs have also been found here. These were probably used for grinding. People of Mehrgarh learnt to make pottery on the potter's wheel. They also designed their pots.

People usually buried their dead in pits, sometimes with domestic animals. Several burial sites have been found



at Mehrgarh. In one instance, the dead person was buried with goats, which were probably meant to serve as food in the next world.

Burzahom (Jammu and Kashmir) : Burzahom in the present state of Jammu and Kashmir was the first Neolithic site to be discovered in the Indian subcontinent. The Neolithic people of Burzahom grew crops like wheat, barley and different types of lentils. However, hunting-gathering was more important than farming and herding. People probably domesticated animals such as dogs and goats.



Burzahom

At Burzahom, people lived in deep pits. This mode of habitation is termed as **pit dwelling**. They plastered the sides of the pits with mud. The pits were narrow at the top and wide at the base. Some of the deeper pits had a few steps leading down. Thatched roofs supported by posts probably covered the pits. People perhaps lived in such pits to avoid winters. Ovens, husk and charcoal

have been found inside as well as outside the pits. This suggests that people living there might have cooked both indoors and outdoors.

Pit homes disappeared during the later phases of the settlement. People started living in mud huts at ground level. The style of pottery also changed. The potters of Burzahom started to make shiny black pottery. Though the potter's wheel was known, most of the pottery was still made of hand.

The dead were buried in pits, sometimes with domestic animals.

Daojali Hading (North-East) : This is a site on the hills near Brahmaputra Valley, close to routes leading into China and Myanmar. Stone tools including mortars and pestles have been found at this site. These indicate that people were probably growing grains and preparing food from it. At Daojali Hading, land was cleared by burning forests and cereals and yams were grown. People of Daojali Hading used mud, stones and slabs for preparing food from grains and vegetables.

At Daojali Hading, pots were shaped with tools wrapped in cords. These pots bear cord marks.

Terminology

trenches	:	long narrow and deep ditches
tribe	:	a group of families sharing same beliefs, practices, etc
megaliths	:	large stones
chalcolithic age	:	Copper age

Recap

- ❖ Farming or agriculture showed an extensive growth in the Neolithic Age.
- ❖ During this age, people started to domesticate animals like cow, goat, dog, sheep, donkey, etc.
- ❖ People used advanced tools in this age.
- ❖ The invention of wheel is the great achievement of this age.
- ❖ In this age, people began to live in communities which resulted in society and family.
- ❖ People used to bury their deads with many objects that they used during their lifetime.
- ❖ The Neolithic Age was followed by the Chalcolithic Age.
- ❖ The Chalcolithic people used copper for many things as tools and ornaments.
- ❖ People were sacred of the sun, lightning, earthquake, etc, so they worshipped the sky, sun and rain.



 Objective Type Questions

A. Tick (✓) the correct option :

- The domesticated animals were :
 (a) dog (b) goat (c) sheep (d) all of these
- People used to store grains in :
 (a) pits (b) trenches (c) pots (d) all of these
- Invention of the Neolithic age was :
 (a) fire (b) wheel (c) copper (d) bronze
- Another name for Chalcolithic Age is :
 (a) Iron age (b) Copper Age (c) Bronze Age (d) none of these
- Man began to use clothes made from :
 (a) cotton (b) wool (c) silk (d) nylon

B. Fill in the blanks :

- At _____ bones of sheep have found.
- Neolithic people worshipped _____, _____, _____, _____, etc.
- The dead bodies were burried along with many _____ .
- Copper began to be _____ with other metals for _____ metals.
- The houses at Mehrgarh were _____ and _____ in shape.

C. State true or false :

- People used axes, ploughs, sickles and hoes to clear forests.
- Neolithic sites were found in north-east and south-west of India.
- Some of the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic tools continued to be used during the Neolithic Age.
- Copper was the first metal to be discovered.
- Daojali Hading is a site on the hills near Brahmaputra valley.

D. Match the following :

- | | |
|-------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Milk | (a) Chalcolithic Age |
| 2. Wool | (b) goats |
| 3. Gulfkral | (c) sheep |
| 4. Copper | (d) Jammu and Kashmir |

 Subjective Type Questions

E. Very short answer type questions :

- Which is the last stage of the Stone Age?
- Name the animals that were domesticated during the Neolithic Age?



3. What are the tools used by Neolithic man?
4. What is a tribe?
5. Name some places of Neolithic settlements.

F. Short answer type questions :

1. Why did man started to domesticate animals?
2. Why did man started worship the sun, water and fire?
3. Explain in brief the invention of wheel.
4. How did Neolithic man burry the dead?
5. How did man use fire?

G. Long answer type questions :

1. What was the importance of domestication of animals in the Neolithic Age?
2. Explain the tools of the Neolithic man in detail.
3. How did the wheel change the life of the Neolithic man?
4. Describe the social and religious life of Chalcolithic man.
5. What are the differences between Neolithic Age and Chalcolithic Age?



To Do Hour

- ❖ Make a report on the Megalithic burials.
- ❖ Paste pictures of pots of the Neolithic man in the given space.



Net Check

Browse the internet and gather information about the invention of wheel.

<https://www.scienceabc.com> > innovation



Think and Answer

Which ancient text is regarded as the first work of history by an Indian?

