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STONE AGE

Pre-Historic period – events before the invention of writing (Paleolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic, Chalcolithic).

Proto History – Period between pre-history and history, (Indus Valley Civilization).

History Period – Study of past after the invention of writing.

Pre-historic – IVC – Vedic Period – Territorial states or Mahajanapadas – Mauryan Empire – Sangam Age – Post Mauryan Period – Gupta Age – Post Gupta Age.

The history of human settlements in India dates back to prehistoric times that are marked by the stone age, bronze age, and iron age.

There are no written or decipherable records available for this period of history, hence it is known prehistoric period.

This time period dates back from 2.5 million years ago to 1,200 B.C.

The available knowledge is based on some archaeological evidence like pottery, artifacts, stone tools, and metal implements used by prehistoric people that are found from many places.

During that time stone tools were used by the people for hunting.

Since there were no written notes it was very difficult to interpret the lifestyle and behaviour of the people who lived back then.

The evidence of this period is found out using archaeology and excavation.

Chronological sequence	Name of Prehistorical period	Time period
I	Paleolithic (Old Stone Age)	2 Million BC to 10,000 BC
II	Mesolithic (Middle Stone Age)	10,000 BC to 8,000 BC
III	Neolithic (New Stone Age)	8000 BC to 4000 BC
IV	Chalcolithic	4000 BC to 1500BC*
V	Iron Age	1500 BC to 200 BC

Ancient History is categorised into three ages: Stone Age, Bronze Age and the Iron Age. Let's talk about all three ages.

Paleolithic Age (Old Stone Age)

The Paleolithic Age is also called the Ice age because the entire earth was covered with snow and the sunshine coming on the earth was a rare occasion. But, human life was found in the tropical regions since the ice used to melt there

First stone tools made of Quartzite – “Quartzite men”.

Major characteristics of the Paleolithic Age

The people of this age used to live in the caves and rock shelters near the river and valleys

Humans didn't know how to cook and agriculture and pottery were unknown to them

Use of fire was started during this time

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They used to eat wild fruits and vegetables and hunt on a large scale

All the weapons used by them were purely made from stone

Use of land bridges was found during this period.

Tools: Used tools such as axe, cleavers and scrappers made out of bones and stones

Habitation & occupation

Hunters & gatherers

Nomadic people - no settled life

No knowledge of agriculture

Found shelter in caves

Cave paintings are found from these times, there are about eight hundred rock shelters in Bhimbetka (Madhya Pradesh), five hundred of which bear paintings.

The Paleolithic Age is divided into three phases according to the types of weapons used and climate conditions:

Lower Paleolithic Age: up to 100,000 BC

Believed in Homo erectus

Lived in India

Used tools for hunting, butchering, skinning the animals

Lower Paleo sites-Mostly Central Asia-South Eastern parts of India)

Life-Open air, river Valley, Rock shelter caves

Made few expressive sound

Middle Paleolithic Age: 100,000 BC – 40,000 BC

First identified on the R. Pravara at Neavsa (Maharashtra)

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Flake industry predominant

Upper Paleolithic Age: 40,000 BC – 10,000 BC

Appearance of modern man(HomoSapiens)

Animals remains in Belan Valley-Mirzapur

Goat,sleep and cattle were exploited

Evidence of Art-Bhimbetka rock painting

Important Sites

Indian sites

Belan valley (Uttar Pradesh) ,Sohan valley (Present day Pakistan),Punjab,Kashmir,Rajasthan (Thar desert)Narmada Valley

Mesolithic Period (Middle Stone Age):

Period:10,000BC-8000BC

During this period, the climate became warm due to which a large amount of ice melted. Major developmental changes occurred in both the plant and human life.

Major characteristics of the Mesolithic Period

In the start, the primary things people used to do were hunting, fishing and food gathering.

Later, they shifted to domesticating animals like dogs, sheep, goats and cultivated plants which laid the foundation of agriculture

Mesolithic people used to wear clothes made from animal skin

People started using bows and arrows for hunting

Tools

The major feature of this period was microliths – small stone tools made of flint or chert. These tools were used to hunt smaller animals and birds

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Tools used include blades, daggers, spearheads, crescents, arrowheads, triangles, sickles, trapezes, etc.

Mesolithic people were art lovers and used to draw paintings on the stone depicting the wild animals, hunting scenes, dancing and food collection

This period witnessed the first human colonization of the Ganga Plains

It was a transitional period (intermediate period) between the Paleolithic and Neolithic periods. Thus, it is also sometimes referred as the Late Stone age.

Important Sites

Langhnaj (Gujarat): Earliest evidence of burial of dead are found

Bagaur (Rajasthan): Had a microlithic industry

Adamgarh (Madhya Pradesh): Earliest evidence of domestication of animals)

Neolithic Period (New Stone Age)

Last phase of stone age

Period:8000BC to 4000BC

During this period humans made a lot of significant changes in their social and economic life.

Major characteristics of the Neolithic Period

People of this period discovered fire and agriculture started on a huge scale. They started cultivating crops like wheat, ragi and horse gram

Houses of mud and reed were built

Since agriculture had started people needed something to store grains. That's why pottery was also born

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In the start, pottery was made by hand and later pottery wheels were used(Discovery of Wheel)

The people used the microlithic blades and took the next step and built more advanced tools from the polished stones

Other Weapons like needles, scrapers, borers, arrowheads and many more were made from the bones

People knew how to build boats and could weave cloth

Neolithic people used to live near the hilly river valleys and slopes of the hills

Tools - Polished stone tools were used.

Burins, saws and chisels were found

Black burnished ware, grey ware and mat-impressed ware used in pottery.

Habitant and Occupation

Systematic agriculture was started that was made possible due to change in the climate.

Slash and burn system was used.

Horse Gram and Ragi were cultivated

Evidence of dogs, pigs and chickens are also found

Wheel was discovered in this age.

Domestication of cattle, sheep & goats

Use of fertilizers, sickle and pottery in agriculture

Fire baked earthen pots are found at many places

Important Sites

Mehrgarh” – Baluchistan – oldest neolithic site.

South of Godavari river

Burzahom (2700 BC, Kashmir)

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Gufkral (2000 BC, Kashmir)
Chirand (2000 BC, near Patna)
Hills of Assam, Garo hills (Meghalaya)
Northern spurs of Vindhya in Mirzapur and Allahabad (Uttar Pradesh)
Hallur, Maski, Brahmagiri, Takkalkota (Karnataka)
Paiyampalli (2000 to 1000 BC, Tamil Nadu)
Mehargarh (7000 BC, Pakistan) – Oldest neolithic settlement
Piklihal (Andhra Pradesh)
Untur (2000 to 1000 BC, Andhra Pradesh)
Burzahom – dogs were buried with masters.
Allahabad – cultivation of rice

Chalcolithic Age (Stone Copper Age)

In the Chalcolithic age, metal was used along with stone weapons.

Copper first metal to be used

Major Characteristics of Chalcolithic Age:

Agriculture was majorly developed in this age and people produced several pulses like green gram, grass pea, lentil and black gram

People domesticated several animals like cows, sheep, goats, pigs and buffaloes and hunted deer.

Jhum Cultivation practiced

Chalcolithic people used to live in the eastern regions and are mostly fish and rice

Use of Copper & stone tools was found

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More of a transitional period between the Neolithic & the Bronze age.

Black and red pottery along with ochre-coloured pottery were popular(Painted Pottery)

White linear designs were crafted by the people

Infant mortality was very high

Tools were made up of copper and stones

Chalcolithic people knew about weaving and spinning

People used to live in thatched houses made of mud bricks. Although the chief of the village used to live in a large rectangular house marking the beginning of social inequalities

Tools

Main tools of this period were made of both stones and copper. Unique feature of this period was painted black pottery as well as Red Ware

Places

Malwa ware – richest among chalcolithic ceramics.

Narmada valley (Gujarat) and

Gilund (Rajasthan),

Balathal (Rajasthan),

Ahar (Rajasthan),

Dhulia (Svalda culture, Maharashtra),

Bronze Age:

The Bronze Age ended the Stone Age. The timeline of this age is 3,300 to 1,200 BCE

People started making weapons and tools made from bronze

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During the period states and kingdoms emerged. People started migrating and trading with each other

The wheel and the ox-drawn plough were invented. Proto-writing also started during the period

Social stratification and slavery were introduced into society

Iron Age

The time period of the Iron Age is between 1200 B.C. and 600 B.C.

People from Europe, Asia and parts of Africa started making weapons from iron and steel

This age witnessed the arrival of Aryans. Jainism and Buddhism were also introduced

Mahajanapadas, the first civilization on the banks of the river Ganga after the Indus Valley also started during this period

Conclusion

In human history, these three periods are very important since they tell us how many humans have evolved. In the start the man didn't know anything about cooking, agriculture, trading, politics but as the years passed he learned a lot of ways to live more efficiently.