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General Studies

Volume 1

Ancient and Medieval History of India



G.S. PAPER

ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL HISTORY OF INDIA

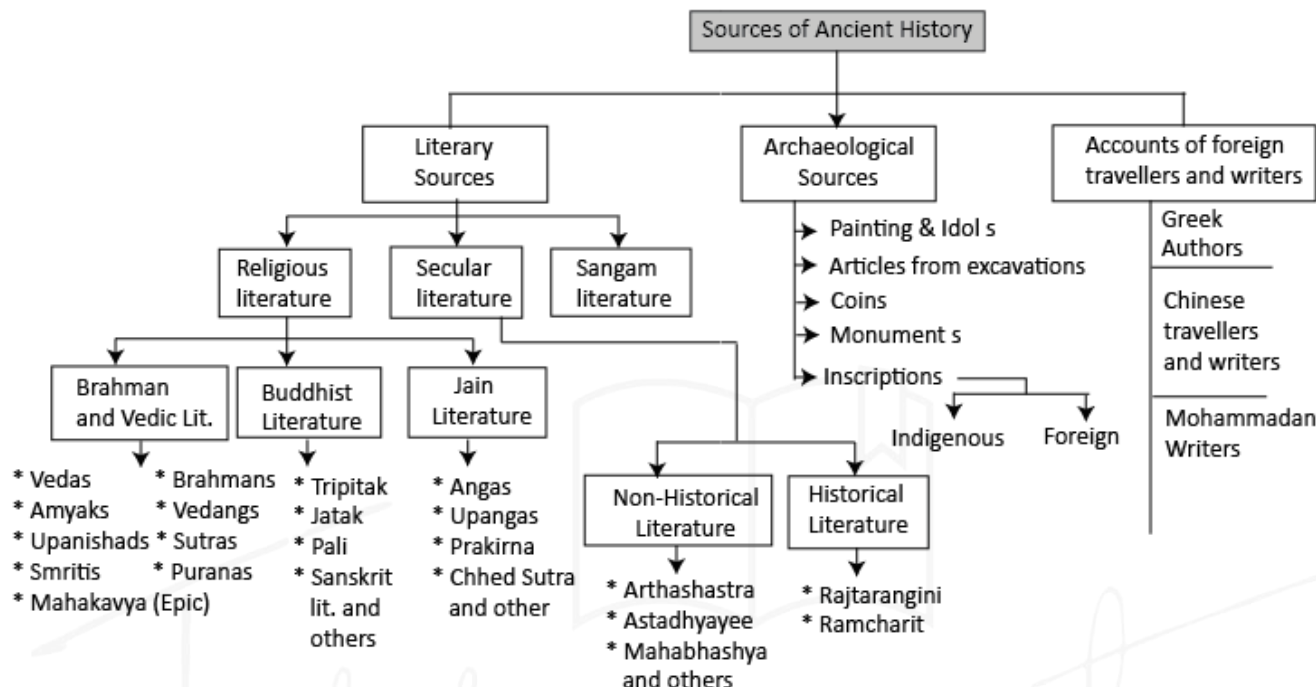
S.No.	Chapter Name	Page No.
1.	Sources of Ancient Indian History <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Archeological Sources • Literary Sources 	1
2.	Stone Age <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Palaeolithic Age • Mesolithic Period (Middle Stone Age) • Neolithic Period (New Stone Age) 	6
3.	Chalcolithic Age (3500 BC-1000 BC) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Characteristics • Important Chalcolithic Cultures and their features • Other Chalcolithic Sites • Megalithic Culture 	13
4.	Indus Valley Civilization <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discovery of Indus valley civilization • Phases of Harappan civilization • Important sites of Harappan civilization • Features of Indus valley civilization 	20
5.	Vedic Age (1500-600 BC) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vedic Literature • Early/ Rig Vedic Period (1500-1000 BC) • Later Vedic Period (1000-600 BC) 	30
6.	Jainism and Buddhism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reasons behind their origin • Buddhism • Jainism • Royal Patrons of Jainism • Reasons for the decline of Jainism • Jainism Vs. Buddhism • Similarities between Jainism and Buddhism • Other Heterodox Sects 	45
7.	Mahajanapadas (600-300 BC) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Causes of rising of Magadha • Haryanka Dynasty (545-412 BCE) • Shishunaga Dynasty (413 BCE to 345 BCE) • Nanda Dynasty (345-321 BCE) • Social and Material Life in the age of Mahajanpadas • Administrative system during the age of Mahajanpadas • Legal and Social system • Foreign Invasions 	76

8.	Mauryan Empire <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sources of Mauryan Empire • Mauryan Dynasty • Mauryan Administration • Mauryan Art and Architecture 	85
9.	Post-Mauryan Age <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Causes for the fall of the Maurya Empire • Foreign ruling dynasties • Indigenous Ruling dynasties 	103
10	Sangam Age <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Important Kingdoms of Sangam Age: • Life during the Sangam Age 	115
11.	Gupta Era <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rulers of Gupta Empire • Gupta Administration • Gupta Economy • Agriculture • Society • Gupta Art and Architecture • Universities and Education • Science and Technology • Mathematics • Literature • The decline of the Gupta Empire 	127
12.	Early Medieval India (750-1200AD) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medieval Period • Indian Feudalism • Gurjara-Pratiharas (8th century CE - 11th century CE) • The Palas of Bengal (8th-12th century) • The Rashtrakutas (8th - 10th century CE) • The Chedis (Kalachuri) of Tripuris • The Senas of Bengal • The Western Gangas • The Eastern Gangas • The History of Kashmir 	139
13.	Chola Empire <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political History • Administrative Structure • Chola Village Administration • Land Revenue Administration • Chola inscriptions • Art and Architecture • Economy • Society • Religion • Calendar • Positions of Brahmins • Army • Chalukyas of Kalyani • Chola-Chalukyas War • End of the Chola Empire 	153

14.	Arab Invasion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arab conquest of Sind • The Ghaznavids 	166
15.	Delhi Sultanate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slave/Ilbardi Dynasty (1206-1290) • Khilji Dynasty (1290-1320) • The Tughlaq Dynasty (1320-1413) • Sayyid Dynasty (1414-51) • Lodhi Dynasty (1451-1526) • Administration, Economic & Social Life under Delhi Sultanate • Decline of Delhi Sultanate 	172
16.	Vijayanagar and Bahmani kingdoms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vijayanagar Kingdom (1336–1672) • Sangama dynasty • Saluva dynasty (1485-1505 AD) • Tuluva dynasty • Aravidu dynasty (1570-1650 AD) • Foreign Travellers about Vijayanagara • Bahmani Sultanate (1347-1527 AD) • Deccan Sultanates 	188
17.	Mughal Empire <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emperors 	199
18.	Maratha Empire and Other Regional States <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rise of Marathas • Shahji Bhonsle • Shivaji Raje Bhonsle (1674–1680) • Sambhaji (1681–1689) • Rajaram (1689–1707) • Shahu (1708–1749) • Rajaram II/Ramraja (1749–1777) • Peshwa (1640–1818) • Balaji Vishwanath Bhatt (1713–1719) • Baji Rao I (1720–1740) • Balaji Baji Rao I/ Nana Sahib I (1740–61) • Madhav Rao (1761–1772) • Raghunath Rao (1772–1773) • Narayan Rao (1772–1773) • Raghunath Rao (1773–1774) • Sawai Madhav Rao (1774–1795) • Baji Rao II (1796–1818) • Post Mughal Regions 	222
19.	Religious Movements in Medieval Period <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Philosophy in Medieval India • Bhakti movement • Sufism • Sikhism 	242

1 CHAPTER

Sources of Ancient Indian History



Archeological Sources

- Numismatics- study of coins.
- Epigraphy- study of inscriptions.
- Archeology = 'Archaiois' + 'Logia' (archaios= **ancient** and logia = **knowledge**).



1. Inscriptions/ Epigraphs/ Edicts

- Oldest inscriptions - Emperor Ashoka- majorly in Brahmi script.
- Other inscriptions

Name	Found	About
Naganika's inscription	Naneghat, Maharashtra	Works of Satavahana King Satakarni I
Nasik inscription	Nasik caves, Maharashtra	Gautamiputra Satkarni
Prayag Prashasti/ Allahabad Pillar	Allahabad, UP	Samudragupta ; written in Sanskrit by Harisena .
Aihole Inscription	Karnataka	By Ravikirti about Pulkeshin II , the Chalukya king of Badami.
Hathigumpha inscription	Udaygiri, Odisha	About King Kharvela .

2. Copper-Plates

- Engraved for **'land-grants'** and issued to the grantee.
- **3 plates of copper**, tied with each other through copper knot.
- **Upper and last portions are left not engraved** as these can be blurred with time.
- Inform about the **socio-economic condition** of that period.
- **Eg. Sohgaura-copper plate** informs us about severe drought and the measures undertaken by authorities to tackle the problem of food-shortage.

3. Coins

- Inform about the **trade and commercial activities**, and **economic and technological development**.
- Dates mentioned **help us to know about the chronology of kings**.
- **First coin of India - 'Punchmarked coins'** made by the method of punching.
- Possibly introduced **by the trading guilds** and not by any ruler.
- **Ratio of purity** in coins - interpret **about the economic condition of the**
- **Ruler** and his time.
- **First gold coin - by Indo-Greeks**.
- **Purest gold coins** issued by **'Kushanas'**.
- **Maximum number** but **impure gold coins- Guptas**.

4. Monuments/ Memorials

- Study helps us to **interpret the technical skills, living standard, economic condition & architectural style** of the time.
- **Depict the prosperity of a ruler** or the dynasty.
- **3 major styles** :
 - Nagar style in the North.
 - Dravid style in the South.
 - Vesara style in Deccan.

5. Sculpture

- **Harappan Sculptures-** Made of stone, steatite, clay, terracotta, lime, bronze, ivory, wood etc- uses- idols, icons, toys, entertainment.
- **Bronze statues** (Harappan civilization) and **toys** (Diamabad).
- **Mauryan sculptures - Yakshi of Didarganj** - contemporary affluence and aesthetic sense of people.
- **Statue of Kanishka- foreign origin of the king** and costume of foreign style, like, high shoes, overcoats etc.

6. Paintings

- **Earliest** instances of **paintings- Bhimbetka** (Madhya Pradesh) - drawn **by Mesolithic cave-dwellers** by using colours and tools from surrounding nature.
- **Ajanta paintings-** information about **religious ideology, spiritual serenity, ornaments, costumes, foreign visitors** etc.
- **Chola Paintings-** display the **concept of 'divine kingship'** of Chola polity.

7. Archaeological Remains

A. Potteries:

- **Base equipment** from protohistory to Early Medieval period.
- **Composed of** various items, like, **bowls, plates, pots, etc.**
- **Differentiated** according to respective culture, shapes, fabrics, surface-treatment (fabric, colour, designs, painting), pottery-making technique etc.
- **Specific pottery-type** is assigned to **particular culture/period**.

B. Beads

- **Made of various materials**, like, **stone, semi-precious stones** (like Agate, Chalcedony, Crystal, Turquoise, Lapis-lazuli), **glass, metals like gold, copper; terra cotta, ivory, shell etc.**
- **Different shapes** like round, square, cylindrical, barrel-shaped etc.
- Can be **used as a source to know the technological development & esthetic sense** of a specific period.

C. Faunal Remains/Bones

- Excavations reveal large amounts of bones or faunal remains.
- **Shed light on the surrounding historical ecology or ecosystem** of that particular site.
- **Helps to understand the dietary habits of concerned people.**

D. Floral Remains

- Give **information on historical ecology** and **dietary habits** of concerned people.

Literary Sources



1. Religious sources

- Base source: **Brahmin texts** like Vedic texts, Sutras, Smriti, Puranas and Epics.

Vedic Texts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rig Veda- oldest - gives us an idea of Rig vedic society • Sam Veda, Yajur Veda and Atharva Veda - information about the society of later Vedic period. • History of 900 years (1500B.C-600B.C). • Give information about the origin of Aryans, their political structure, society, economic activities, religious perspectives, culture, etc.
Sutras	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Words or hymns placed beautifully like pearls in a thread. • Gives information about the Vedic period. • six parts: Shiksha, Vyakrana, Chhanda, Kalpa, Nirukta and Jyotish
Upveda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ayurveda- related to medical science - upveda of Rig Veda. • Gandharva veda- related to music - upveda of Sam Veda. • Dhanur veda- related to war skills, arms and ammunitions- upaveda of Yajur Veda. • Shilpa veda- related to art sculpture and architecture - upveda of Atharva Veda.
Smriti Texts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manusmriti - oldest Smriti text (200B.C- 200A.D). • Yagyavalkya Smriti - compiled between 100A.D to 300A.D. • Narada smriti (300A.D-400A.D) and Parashara Smriti (300A.D-500A.D)- social and religious conditions of the Guptas.
Puranas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compiled after smritis; 18 in number. • Markandeya Purana, Vayu Purana, Brahma Purana, Vishnu Purana, Bhagwat Puran and Matsya Purana - ancient Purana . • Information of ancient Indian dynasties in Matsya, Vayu and Vishnu puranas. • Only available source of the dynasties that ruled after the battle of Mahabharata. • Provide chronology of different dynasties and their hierarchy
Epics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A part of Brahmanic texts • Most important- Mahabharata and Ramayana. • Ramayana - by Valmiki - Post Mauryan period.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mahabharata - by Ved Vyas - completed in Gupta period - initially, named as Jai Samhita /Bharata
Buddhist Literature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pitakas - oldest Buddhist texts. • Compiled after Lord Buddha attained Nirvana. • 3 types : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sutta Pitaka- consists of religious ideology & sayings of Buddha. ○ Vinaya Pitaka- consists of the laws of Buddhist Sangha. ○ Abhidhamma Pitaka- consists of Buddhist philosophies. • Jataka kathas - anecdotes of previous births of Lord Buddha • Milindapanho - Buddhist text - gives us information about the philosophical dialogue between Greek ruler Minander and Buddhist saint Nagasena. • Divyavadana - 4th century A.D - information about different rulers. • Aryamanjushrimulka - information about different rulers of Gupta Empire from the Buddhist perspective. • Angutarnikaya - gives the names of Sixteen Mahajanapadas.
Sinhalese Texts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consisted of Dipavamsa and Mahavamsa - Buddhist texts. • Dipavamsa - 4th century A.D • Mahavamsa - 5th century A.D. • Provide information about social and cultural life of that time • Knowledge of cultural relation of India and foreign countries.
Jain Texts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main texts- Agama texts (Total 12 in number) • Acharangasutra -part of the Agamas - based on the teachings of Mahavira & talks about the conduct of Jain saints. • Vyakhyaprajapati aka Bhagvati sutra - life of Mahavira. Nayadhammakaha- compilation of teaching of Lord Mahavira. • Bhagavati Sutra - information about the 16 Mahajanapadas. • Bhadrabahu Charit - throws light on the life of Jain Acharya Bhadrabahu and Chandragupta Maurya. • Parishistaparvana - most important Jain text - written by • Hemchandra in 12th century A.D.

2. Non-Religious Texts

- Throw light on almost all the aspects of the society.
- **Ashatadhyayi**- by **Panini** - **oldest grammar/literature of India** - information about the political, social and religious condition of **Pre-Mauryan period.**
- **Mudrarakshasa**- by **Vishkhadutta** - information about the **Mauryan period.**
- **Arthashastra** - **Kautilya/Vishnugupta/Chanakya** - divided into 15 parts - information about **Indian political system**, condition of **Mauryan age.**
- **Mahabhashya** of **Patanjali** and **Malvikagnimitram** by **Kalidasa** - information about '**Shunga Dynasty**'.
- **Kamasutra of Vatsyana** - information on social life, physical relations, family life, etc.
- '**Mrichchakatikam**' by **Shudraka** and '**Dashkumaracharita**' by **Dandin** - information of the social life of that period.

3. Sangam literature

- **Earliest south Indian literature**
- **Information about** the social, economic and political life of the **people living in deltaic Tamil Nadu.**

Agattiyam	Agastya	A work on grammar of letters
Tolkappiyam (Tamil grammar)	Tolakpiyyar	A treatise on grammar & poetry
Ettutogai (8 anthologies)	- -	Melkannakku combined form.
Pattu pattu (10 idyls)	- -	Melkannakku combined form.
Patinenkilakanakku (18 minor work)	- -	A didactic work.
Kural (Muppai)	Tiruvalluvar	A treatise on polity, ethics, social norms.
Silappadikaram	Ilango Adigal	A love story of Kovalan and Madhavi
Manimekalai	Sittalai Sattanar	The adventures of Manimekalai
Sivaga Sindamani	Tiruttakadevar	A Sanskrit treatise
Bharatam	Perudevanar	The last epic
Pannirupadalam (grammar)	12 disciples of Agastya	A grammatical work on puram literature
Kakkipadiniyam (Prosody)	- -	A work on prosody

4. Foreign Accounts

- Consist of writing of Greek, Roman, Chinese and Arab travelers.

Herodotus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considered the first historian of the world. • Mentioned Indian soldiers fighting along the side of Persians.
Megasthenes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ambassador of Seleucus Nicator, posted in the court of Chandragupta Maurya. • Work - Indica - gives description of the layout of Pataliputra • Mentions about social structure, caste-system, caste-relations etc. • Original Indica is lost.
Periplus of Erythraean Sea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presumed to be written by a fisherman on Egypt coast. • Gives impartial and objective information on the Indo-Roman trade during the Early Historic period. • Inform about the ports on India's coast-line, trade-centres in India, the trade-routes-connecting trade centres and ports, distance between centres, items-of-trade, annual volume of trade, types of ships etc.
Fa-Hien (Fa Xian)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visited India during Gupta period. • Buddhist monk; visited India to seek knowledge from Devbhumi (i.e. India) and visit Buddhist pilgrimage centres.
Hiuen-Tsiang (Xuan Zang)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visited India during Harshavardhana's reign. • Visited Buddhist pilgrimage centres, stayed at Nalanda University. • Studied Buddhism, read original Buddhist works, collected original manuscripts and mementos, made copies, attended Harsha's assembly. • In China, he wrote 'Si-Yu-Ki' (Great Tang Records on the Western Regions) - gives vivid descriptions of what he witnessed in India. • Gives information of kings especially Harsha and his generosity, people and customs of various regions in India, lifestyles etc.

2 CHAPTER

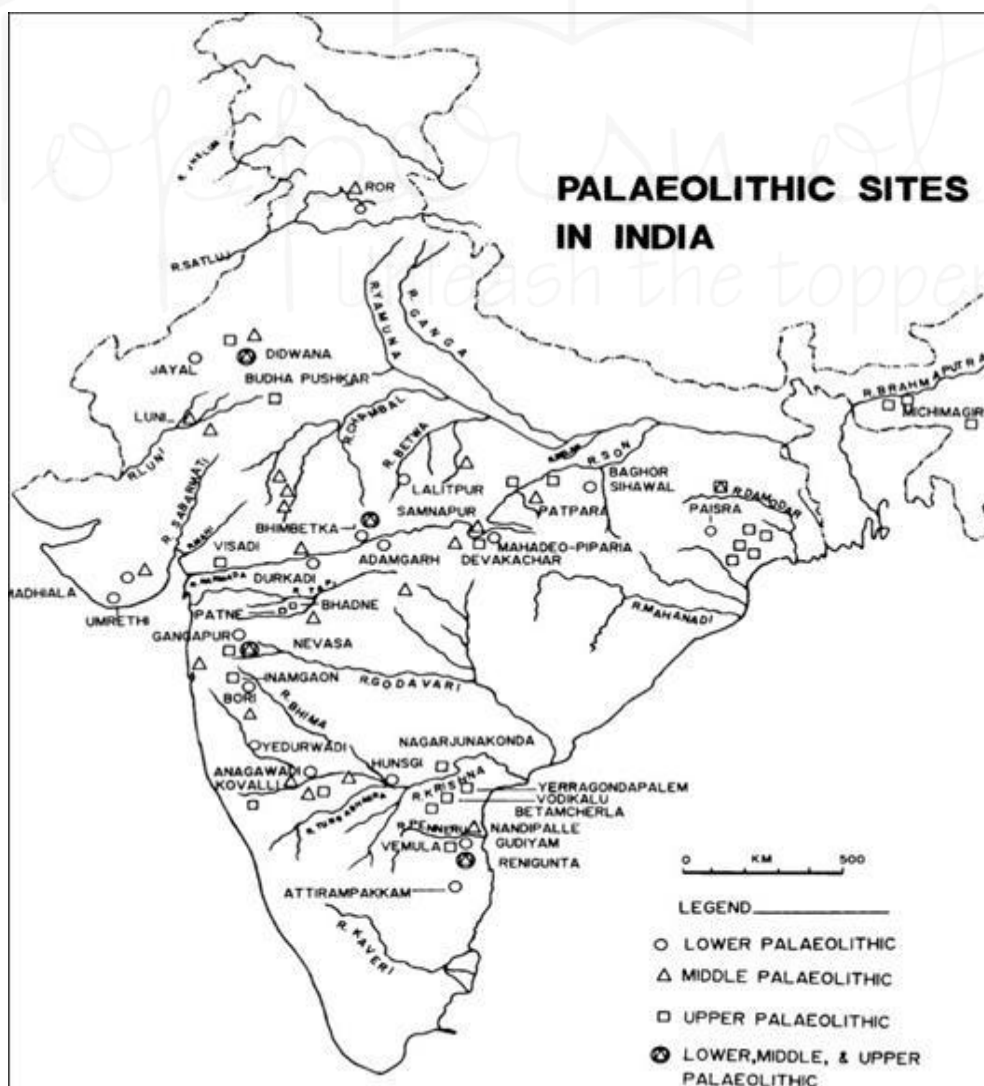
Stone Age



- **Prehistoric period**- no written evidence.
- Main source of **information**- **archaeological excavations**.
- **Pallavaram handaxe** - **First Paleolithic tool in India** - discovered by- Robert Bruce Foote (1863 AD)- also discovered a large number of pre-historic sites in South India
- Based on geological age, the type and technology of stone tools, and subsistence base, the **Indian stone age is divided into**-
 - **Palaeolithic age (Old Stone Age)**: Period – 500,000 – 10,000 BCE
 - **Mesolithic age (late Stone Age)**: Period – 10,000 – 6000 BCE
 - **Neolithic age (new Stone Age)**: Period – 6000 – 1000 BCE

Palaeolithic Age (Old Stone Age)

First archaeological period in prehistory.



- Palaios (old) + lithos (stones) = Palaeolithic (old stone age)
- Developed in the **Pleistocene period or the Ice Age**.
- The term “**Paleolithic**” was coined by **John Lubbock** in 1885 AD.
- Men were called ‘**Quartzite**’ men in India as the stone tools made of quartzite.
- In **India**, people surviving this age belonged to the ‘**Negrito**’ race and lived in the open air, river valleys, caves, and rock shelters.
- They were **food gatherers and hunters**.
- **No knowledge of houses, pottery, agriculture**.
- In later stages, they **discovered fire**.
- In the upper paleolithic age, there is **evidence of art** in the form of **paintings**.
- Humans used **unpolished, rough stones** like hand axes, choppers, blades, bruins, and scrapers.
- **Basic social structure**- based on a **band society** (<100 people formed a small community).
- **Nomadic people**, bound by customs, social etiquettes, and norms
- According to the nature of the stone tools used by the people and the nature of the change of climate, the **paleolithic age in India is divided into three phases**:
 - **Lower/ Early Palaeolithic Age**: up to 100,000 BC
 - **Middle Palaeolithic Age**: 100,000 BC – 40,000 BC
 - **Upper Palaeolithic Age**: 40,000 BC – 10,000 BC

Lower Palaeolithic Age (Early Palaeolithic Age)

- **Characteristics:**
 - **Maximum time span** (covering whole Lower Pleistocene and bulk of the Middle Pleistocene epoch).
 - **River valleys and terraces** were formed.
 - Early men preferred to live near the water supply, as the stone tools are found mainly in or adjacent to the river valleys.
 - Mainly spread in Western Europe and Africa.
 - **Evidence of the earliest stone tools** - Western Europe - deposits of first Inter-glacial phase in the Lower Pleistocene.
 - Lived a **nomadic lifestyle**.
 - **Hunters and food gatherers**
 - **Contribution of Neanderthal-like Palaethropic men** (3rd stage of hominid evolution)
 - One of the **earliest** lower Palaeolithic sites is **Bori in Maharashtra**.
- **Tools:**
 - **Tools**- made of **limestone** - hand axes, choppers, and cleavers - **rough and heavy**.
 - **First stone tool fabrication** started; k/a **Oldowan tradition**.
 - Splintered stones k/a **eoiliths** - **earliest tools**.
- **Major sites:**
 - Soan valley (in present Pakistan)
 - Thar Desert
 - Kashmir
 - Mewar plains
 - Saurashtra



- Gujarat
- Central India
- Deccan Plateau
- Chotanagpur plateau
- North of the Cauvery River
- Belan valley in UP

Two important cultures -

1. Sohanian culture:

- Name derived from the Sohan River, a tributary of Indus.
- **Sites - Siwalik Hills in North-west India and Pakistan.**
- **Lower Palaeolithic stone tools** found.
- **Animal remains** - horse, buffalo, straight-tusked elephant and hippopotamus.
- Deposits of **pebble tools and choppers** found.

2. Acheulian culture/ Madras Culture:

- Named after the French site of St. Acheul.
- **First effective colonization of the Indian subcontinent.**
- **Synonymous with the lower Palaeolithic settlements** in India.
- Deposits of **hand-axes and cleavers**

Middle Palaeolithic age

● **Characteristics:**

- Mainly **associated with** the early form of man- Neanderthals.
- Evidence of the **use of fire**.
- Middle Paleolithic man was a **scavenger** but little evidence of **hunting and gathering** were traced.
- **Dead were painted** before burial.
- **Slow transformation of Acheulian culture** by shedding some of the tool types and by incorporating new forms and new techniques of making them.

● **Tools:**

- Became **smaller, thinner and lighter**.
- Majorly **dependent on flakes used** to make bores, points, and scrapers etc.
- A **crude pebble industry** is also noticed in this period.
- **Stones** found were very small k/a **microliths**.
- Quartzite, quartz and basalt replaced by **fine-grained siliceous rocks like chert and jasper**
- **Tool Factory sites** at chert outcrops occur in **central India and Rajasthan**.

● **Important sites**

- Belan valley in UP
- Luni valley (Rajasthan)
- Son and Narmada rivers
- Bhimbetka
- Tungabhadra river valleys



- Potwar Plateau (between Indus & Jhelum)
- Sanghao cave (near Peshawar, Pakistan)

Upper Palaeolithic age

• Characteristics:

- Appearance of **Homo Sapiens**.
- **Widespread appearance of figurines and other artifacts** reflecting art and rituals.
- **Discovery of ostrich egg shells** at over 40 sites in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra
- **Extremely cold and arid climate in the high altitude** and northern latitudes.
- **Extensive formation of deserts** in North west India
- **Drainage patterns of western India became almost defunct** and river courses shifted "westwards".
- **Decreasing vegetation cover**.
- Human population faced **rusticated food resources**- that is why Upper Palaeolithic sites are very limited in the arid and semi-arid regions.

• Tools:

- **Bone tools** - needles, fishing tools, harpoons, blades and burin tools.
- Show a marked regional diversity with respect to the **refinement of techniques and standardization of finished tool forms**.
- **Bored stones and grinding stabs have also been found** - advancements in the technology of tool production.

• Major sites:

- Bhimbetka (South of Bhopal) – hand axes and cleavers, blades, scrapers, and a few bruins have been found here.
- Belan
- Son
- Chota Nagpur plateau (Bihar)
- Maharashtra
- Orissa and
- Eastern Ghats in Andhra Pradesh
- Bone tools have been found only at cave sites of Kurnool and Muchchatla Chintamani Gavi in Andhra Pradesh.



Mesolithic Period (Middle Stone Age)

- Derived from Greek words – ‘meso’ and ‘lithic’. aka ‘Middle Stone Age’
- Belonged to the **Holocene era**.

Transitional period between the Paleolithic and Neolithic periods - aka **Late Stone age**.



Characteristics

- **Warm climate with heavy rainfall in summer and moderate rain in winters.**
- Initially hunters and gatherers, but **later domesticated animals and cultivated plants**.
- **Primitive cultivation**, and horticulture began.



- The **first animal to be domesticated - wild ancestor of the dog.**
- **Sheep and goats- most common domesticated animals.**
- **Lived in semi-permanent settlements** along with occupying **caves and open grounds.**
- **Believed in the afterlife** and hence buried dead with food items and other goods.
- People started to **wear clothes made of animal skin.**
- **First human colonization of the Ganga Plains** during this period.
- Last phase - **beginning of plant cultivation.**

Tools - Microliths

- Made of **crypto-crystalline silica, chalcedony or chert**, in geometrical and non-geometrical shapes.
- **Used to make composite tools, spearheads, arrowheads, and sickles.**
- **Enabled to hunt smaller animals** and birds.

Paintings

- Art lovers and initiated rock art in **Prehistory.**
- **First Rock painting in India-** found at **Sohagighat (UP) in 1867.**
- **Themes-** wild animals and hunting scenes, dancing, and food collection.
- Paintings **mostly in red ochre** but sometimes bluish-green, yellow, or white colors have been used
- of the **29 species of animals depicted** in paintings, **Cheetah** occurred **most**
- **No depiction of snakes**
- **Bhimbetka rock paintings** give an idea about the development of religious practices and also reflect the division of labor based on gender. Men have been depicted hunting while women are shown gathering and preparing food.

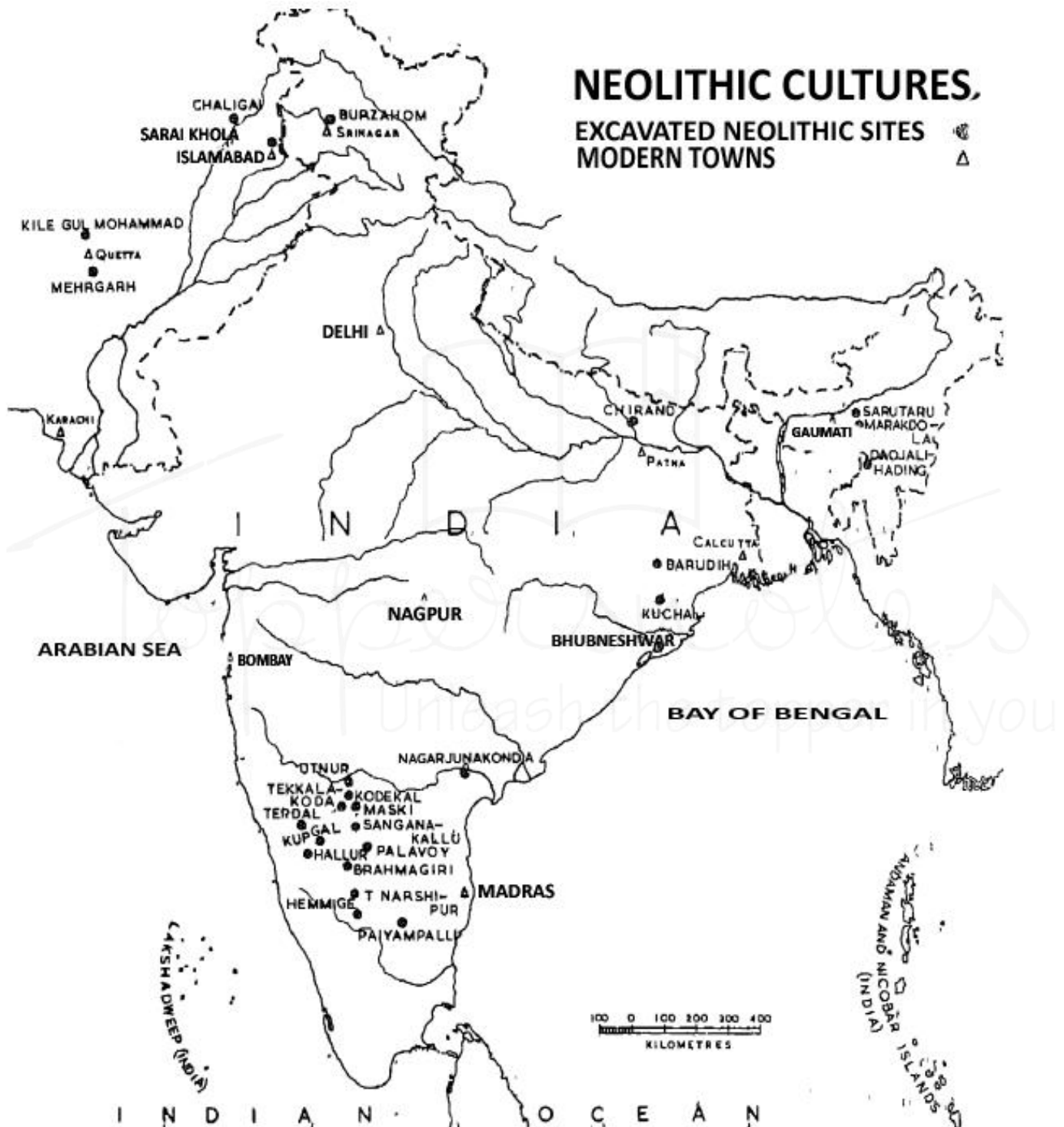
Important Mesolithic Sites

- **Bagore (Rajasthan)**
 - One of the **biggest and best-documented** Mesolithic sites in India
 - On **river Kothari.**
 - Provided the **earliest evidence of the domestication of animals.**
- **Mahadaha, Damdama, Sarai Nahar Rai (Uttar Pradesh)-**
 - Evidence of **human skeletons.**
 - At Mahadaha, **a man and a woman were buried together.**
 - One burial had an **ivory pendant as the Grave God.**
- **Mesolithic rock art sites across India**
 - Central India such as **Bhimbetka caves, Kharwar, Jaora and Kathotia (M.P), Sundargarh**
 - Sambalpur (**Odisha**)
 - Ezhuthu Guha (**Kerala**)
- **Langhnaj (Gujarat) and Biharanpur (West Bengal)**
 - Langhnaj- **Bones of wild animals** (rhinoceros, blackbuck, etc.)
 - Several **human skeletons**
 - Large number of **microliths**



Neolithic Period (New Stone Age)

- Greek words: Neo = new and lithic = stone.
- Coined by Sir John Lubbock in 1865.



Characteristics

- Belongs to the **Holocene geological age**.
- aka '**Neolithic revolution**' (by **V. Gordon Childe**) as it introduced a lot of important changes in man's social and economic life.
- The **man transformed from food gatherer to food producer**.
- **Division of labor** based on sex and age



- **Tools and Weapons**
 - **Polished, pecked, and ground stone tools.**
 - **North-western-** Rectangular axes with curved cutting edge
 - **North-eastern** - polished stone axes with rectangular butt and occasional shouldered hoes.
 - **Southern-** axes with oval sides and pointed butt
- **Agriculture**
 - **Grew fruits and corn** like ragi and horse gram (kulati).
 - Also **domesticated cattle, sheep, and goats.**
- **Pottery**
 - Witnessed **first hand-made pottery** and then used foot's wheel.
 - Included **grey ware, black-burnished ware, and mat impressed ware.**
- **Housing and Settled Life**
 - People lived in **rectangular or circular houses made of mud and reeds.**
 - Also **knew how to make boats** and could **spin cotton, wool, and weave cloth.**
 - **Inhabited mainly the hilly river valleys, rock shelters, and the hills slopes.**

Two phases of Neolithic Culture-

- **Aceramic-** no evidence of ceramic
- **Ceramic-** evidence of pottery, mud houses, copper-arrowheads, blackware pottery, painted pottery.

Important Neolithic Sites

- **Koldihwa (lying south of Allahabad):** Provides evidence of **circular huts** along with crude hand-made pottery.
- **Mahagara:** The earliest evidence of **rice cultivation** in the world
- **Mehrgarh (Balochistan, Pakistan):** **earliest Neolithic site**, where people lived in houses built of sun-dried bricks and cultivated crops like cotton and wheat.
- **Burzahom (Kashmir):** **domestic dogs were buried along with their masters** in their graves, people lived in pits and used tools made of polished stones and bones.
- **Gufkral (Kashmir):** Literal meaning "cave of the potter". This neolithic site is famous for **pit dwelling, stone tools, and graveyards within households.**
- **Chirand (Bihar):** **bone tools** made of antlers
- **Nevasa:** Evidence of **cotton cloth**
- **Piklihal, Brahmagiri, Maski and Takkalakota, Hallur (Karnataka):** discovery of **ash mounds.**



At **Chopani Mando in the Belan Valley of Vindhya** and the middle part of the Narmada valley, occupations from **all three stages (Paleolithic to Neolithic) have been found**- also the **discovery of fossil animal bones** from this site.