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ANCIENT HISTORY

for Civil Services Exam

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ANCIENT HISTORY

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**PRE HISTORIC
PHASE**

PALEOLITHIC PHASE

■ Introduction

- History is the narration of the events which have happened among mankind, including an account of rise and fall of nations as well as of other great changes which have affected the political and social conditions of the human race.
- The history of human settlements in India goes back to **pre-historic times** which literally means **period before the existence of written history**.
- The **technique of radio-carbon dating** is commonly used for dating of the pre-historic period. It is based on **measuring the loss of carbon in organic materials over a period of time**.
- Recent reported artifacts from Bori in Maharashtra suggest the appearance of human beings in India **around 1.4 million years ago**.

Important Terms

- **Pre-History:** It is the period for which we don't not have any written records.
- **Proto history:** This is the period for which we have written records, but we are still unable to decipher the script.
- **Historic Period:** This is the period for which we have written records in the form of inscriptions and other texts.
- **Palaeography:** It is the study of old writing used in inscriptions and other ancient records.

■ Pre Historic India

- Pre-history means before history. No written records are available for the pre-historic period. However plenty of archaeological remains are found in different parts of India to reconstruct the history of this period.
- The archaeological remains of the pre-historic period that are found in different parts of India includes:
 - ▶ Stone tools,
 - ▶ Pottery,
 - ▶ Artifacts, and
 - ▶ Metal Implements .
- In India, the **pre-historic period is divided** into:
 - ▶ **Stone Age**
 - **Paleolithic (Old Stone Age): 5,00,000 - 10,000 BC**
 - **Mesolithic (Middle Stone Age): 10000 - 6000 BC**
 - **Neolithic (New Stone Age): 7000-4000 BC**

- ▶ **Metal Age (Also known as Proto-historic period).**
 - Chalcolithic Age (Copper and Bronze Age) : 4000 BC – 1500 BC
 - Iron Age : 1500 – 200 BC
- The suffix lithic used in above classification indicates that technology in these periods was primarily based on stone.
- Also, these periods were not uniform throughout the Indian subcontinent.

■ Paleolithic or Old Stone Age

- In India, the **Paleolithic Age** developed in the **Pleistocene period or the Ice Age** (Geological Time Scale) and was **spread in practically all parts of India. (except the alluvial parts of Ganga and Indus.)**
- Hunting and food gathering were the main occupations of the people of this phase. **(They had no knowledge of agriculture, fire or pottery of any material.)** Therefore, these people are called as **hunter-gatherers.**
- Man during this period used **tools of unpolished, undressed rough stones and lived in cave and rock shelters.**
- They mainly **used hand axes, cleavers, choppers, blades, scrapers and burin.**
- Their tools were made of **hard rock called 'quartzite'.** Hence Paleolithic men are also called '**Quartzite Men**'.
- The hunting of large animals would have required the combined effort of a group of people with large stone axes. Their way of life became modified with the passage of time since they made attempts to domesticate animals, made crude pots and grow some plants.

Key Highlights

- *These sites were generally located near water sources.*
- Several rock shelters and caves used by the Paleolithic people are scattered across the subcontinent.
- *They were mainly Hunters and Gatherers*
- *Homo sapiens first appeared in the last phase of Paleolithic age.*
- In India, the only hominid fossil found from 'Hathnaura' in the Narmada Valley.

Three Phases of Paleolithic Age

- The Paleolithic Age in India has been divided into three phases according to the nature of stone tools used by the people and also according to the nature of change in the climate.
 - ▶ **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**
 - ▶ The **Early Paleolithic Age** covers the greater part of the Ice Age.
 - ▶ Its characteristic tools are **hand axes, cleavers and choppers.**
 - ▶ Limestone was also used to make tools.
 - ▶ **Sites:**
 - Earliest lower Palaeolithic Site is Bori in **Maharashtra**

Important Paleolithic Sites

Sites	Location
Attirampakam	Chennai
Adamgarh Hill	Narmada Valley
Bhimbetka	Madhya Pradesh
Kurnool	Andhra Pradesh
Shivalik Hills	North India
Sohan Valley and Potwar plateau	North West India

- Sohan river valley (now in Pakistan)
- Thar desert sites
- Belan Valley in the Mirzapur district of UP
- Mewar Plains
- Gujarat
- Deccan Plateau

▶ In this period climate became less humid.

○ **Middle Paleolithic Phase**

▶ Characterized by the use of **stone tools made of flakes mainly scrapers, borers and blade** like tools.

▶ The sites are found in:

- **Belan Valley in UP**
- **Luni Valley (Rajashtan)**
- **Valley of Son, Narmada and Tungabhadra rivers.**
- **Bhimbetka**

○ **Upper Paleolithic Phase**

▶ Emergence of **Homo sapiens**

▶ This stage is marked by lot of bone tools, including needles, harpoons, blades, **burins and scrapers.**

▶ Such tools have been found in:

- **Belan Valley**
- **Son Valley**
- **Eastern Ghats in Andhra Pradesh**
- **Maharashtra**
- **Bhopal (Madhya Pradesh)**
- **Chhota Nagpur plateau**

▶ The climate became warm and less humid.

▶ Paintings at Bhimbetka site belong to this age.

Palaeolithic Tools

- Lower Palaeolithic Hand-axe and cleaver industries.
- Middle Palaeolithic Tools made on flakes.
- Upper Palaeolithic Tools made on flakes and blades.
