



Introduction to History

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What does the word "History" originate from?



It originates from the Greek word "Historia," meaning inquiry or knowledge acquired by investigation.



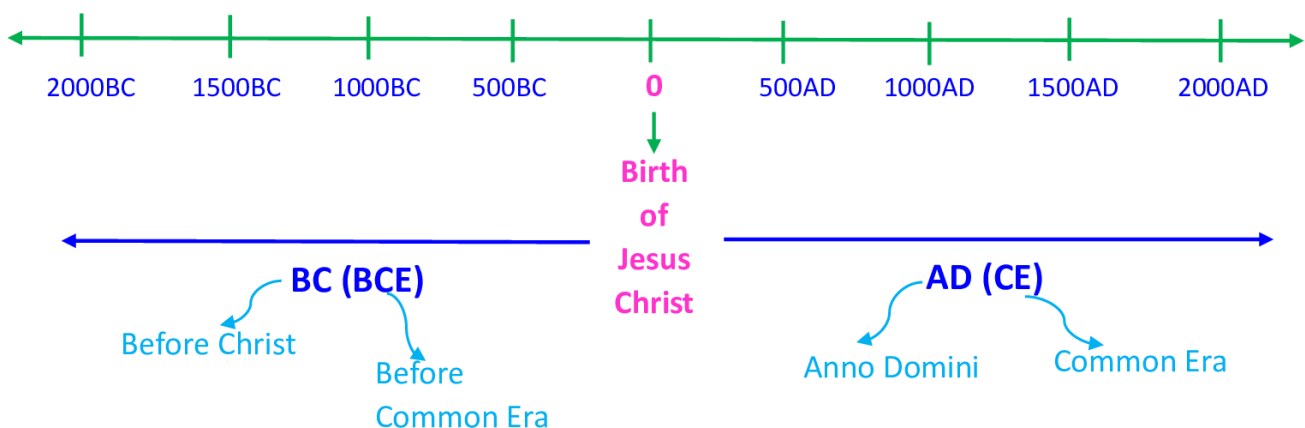
- History refers to the study of past events set in chronological order.
- In simple language, History is all about the study of past events to understand your present and to make your future much better.
- Father of History:** Herodotus
- Father of Modern History:** Leopold von Ranke
- Father of Indian History:** Megasthenes



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Historic System of Dating

← Timeline = Line displaying Past Events →



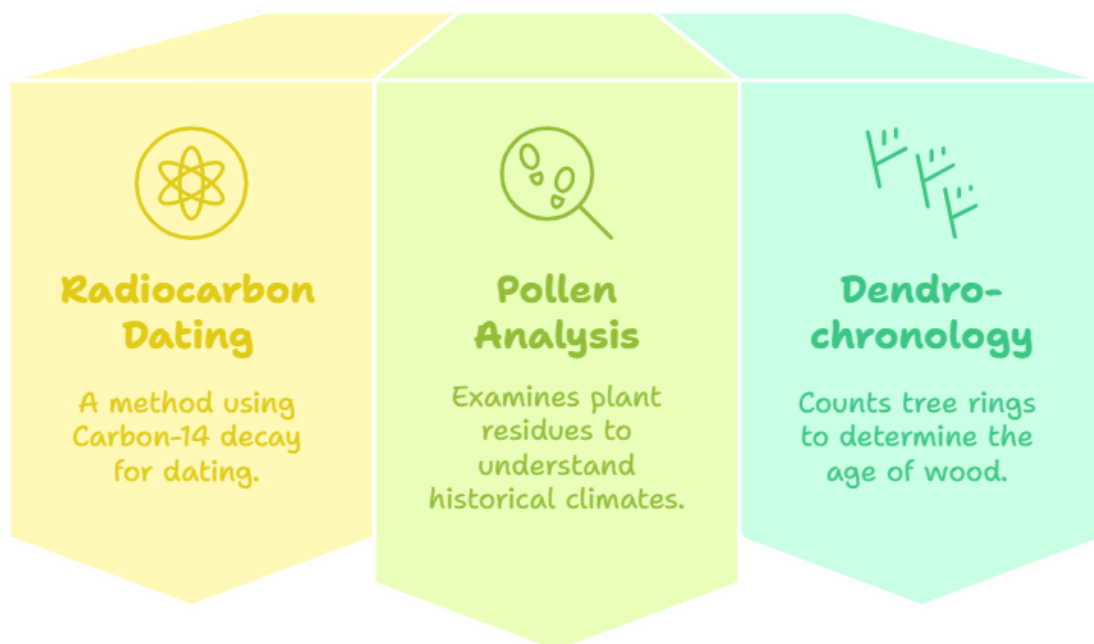
Time in History is calculated in years using BC (BCE) Before Christ (Before Common Era) and AD (CE) Anno Domini (Common Era).

Note:- BC Dates work as negative numbers. e.g.: 2000 BC is much further in the past than 200 BC.



Methods of Dating in History

The methods of dating in history are as follows :-

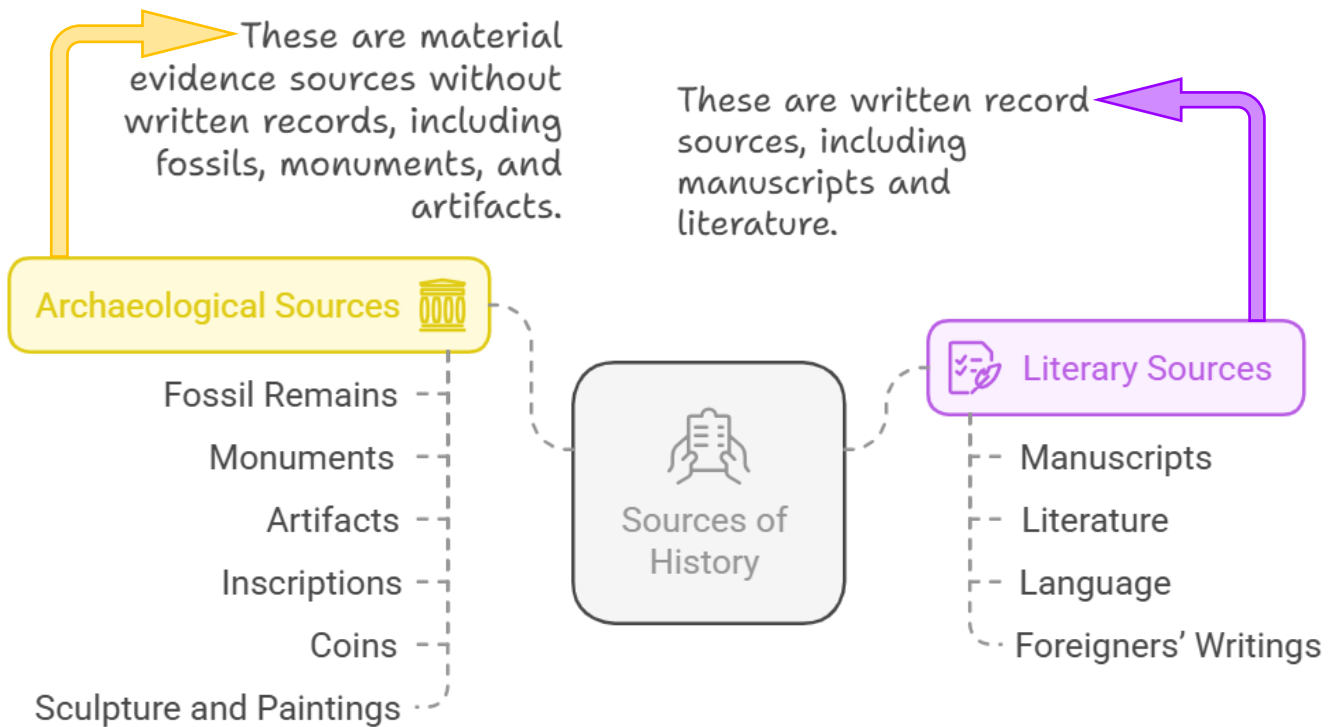


- **Radiocarbon Dating** :- It is also referred to as **Carbon-14** (C-14) dating. C-14 is a weak radioactive isotope of carbon. It is a method that uses the decay of Carbon-14 to estimate the age of organic materials as old as approximately 60000 years. An age could be estimated by measuring the amount of Carbon-14 present in the sample and comparing this against an internationally used reference standard.
- **Pollen Analysis** :- The history of climate and vegetation is known through examining plant residues, especially through Pollen Analysis. On this basis, it is suggested that agriculture was practiced in Rajasthan and Kashmir around 7000-6000 BC.
- **Dendro-chronology** :- It refers to the **number of tree rings** in wood. By counting the number of tree rings in the wood, the date of the wood could be arrived, So, it is the scientific method of dating tree rings (also called growth rings) to the exact year they were formed in a tree.

Sources of History

- ◆ Records of past events are the Sources of History.
- ◆ The Sources of History are broadly categorized as :- 1) Archaeological Sources, 2) Literary Sources.





1.) Archaeological Sources :- Archaeological Sources are the sources that include material evidence such as the remains of monuments or ancient buildings, pottery, tools, coins, inscriptions, paintings, etc. These are the sources that have no written records available. The archaeological sources are as follows :-

- **Fossil Remains:** Human and animal fossils (e.g., Ramapithecus fossils)
- **Monuments:** Temples, palaces, and forts (e.g., Qutub Minar, Taj Mahal)
- **Artifacts:** Weapons, pottery, tools (e.g., Harappan seals)
- **Inscriptions:** Writings on rocks, pillars, and metal plates (e.g., Ashokan Edicts)
- **Coins:** Ancient currency with inscriptions (e.g., Gupta dynasty coins)
- **Sculpture and Paintings:** Murals and statues (e.g., Ajanta and Ellora paintings)

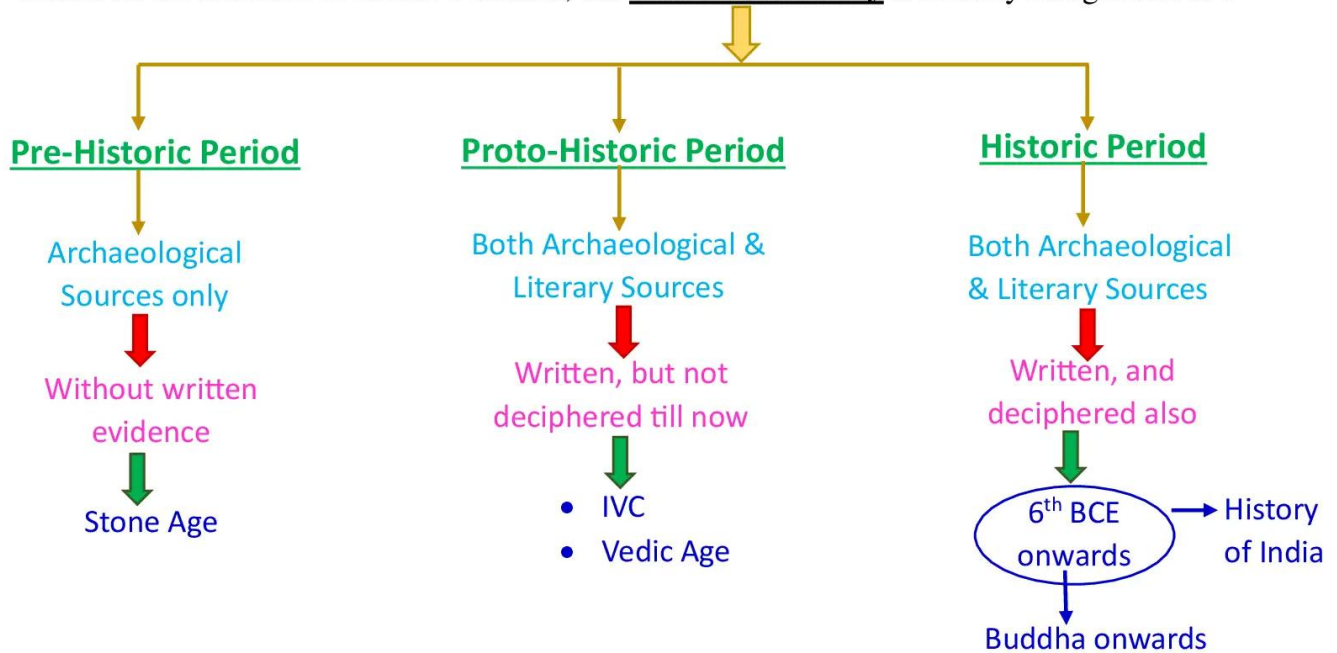
2.) Literary Sources :- Literary Sources are the sources that have written records available such as manuscripts, literature, biographies, etc. The literary sources are as follows :-

- **Manuscripts:** Ancient handwritten texts (e.g., Vedas, Puranas)
- **Literature:** Religious and secular texts (e.g., Mahabharata, Ramayana)
- **Language:** Ancient scripts and dialects (e.g., Brahmi, Sanskrit texts)
- **Foreigners' Writings:** Accounts by travelers and historians (e.g., Megasthenes' Indica, Al-Biruni's Kitab-ul-Hind)



Periods of History

Based on the sources / evidence available, the Periods of History is broadly categorized as :-



History is broadly classified based on the sources of evidence available. These periods help historians understand human civilization and its evolution. The three major periods of history are:

(1). Pre-Historic Period:-

- Based only on archaeological sources.
- No written evidence available.
- Includes the Stone Age.

(2). Proto-Historic Period:-

- Includes both archaeological & literary sources.
- Written records exist but are not deciphered yet.
- Examples: Indus Valley Civilization (IVC) and the Vedic Age.

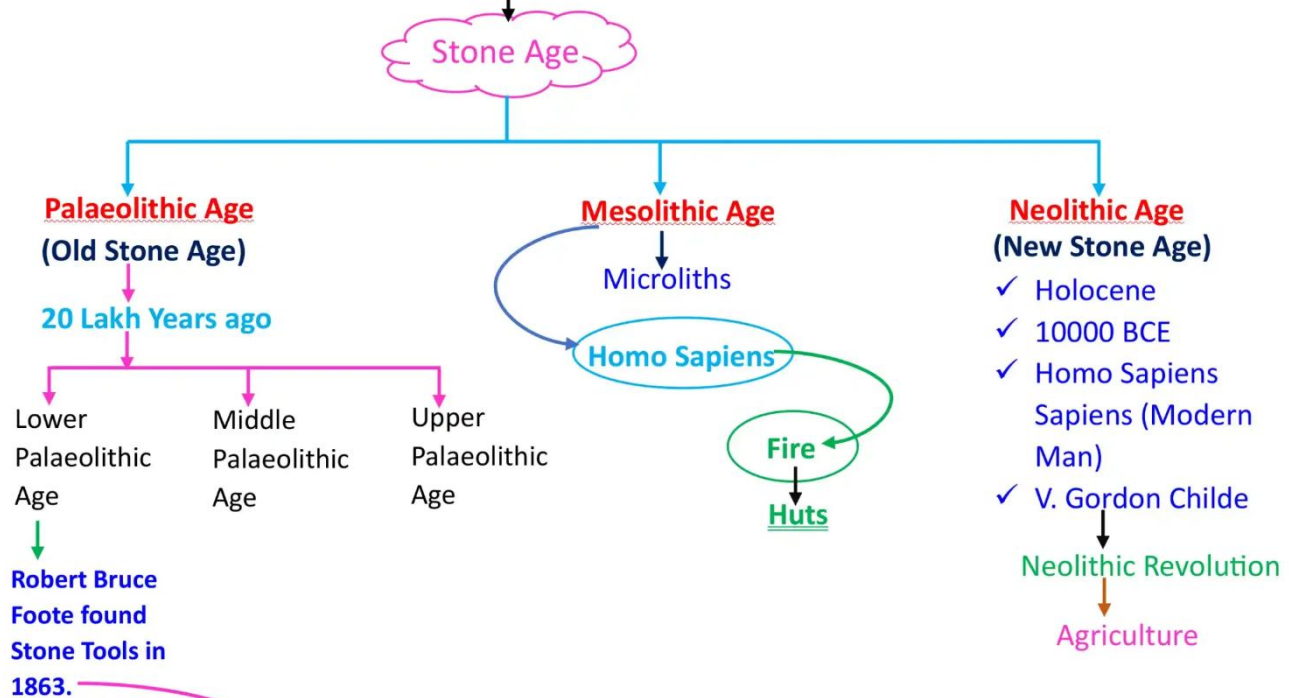
(3). Historic Period:-

- Includes both archaeological & literary sources.
- Written records exist and are deciphered.
- Begins from 6th BCE onwards, covering the period from Buddha onwards.



Pre-Historic Period

Source :- Archaeological Only



(Image Source: <http://www.archeolog-home.com/>)

The **Prehistoric Period** refers to the time before the invention of writing. Since there are no written records from this time, we study it based on tools, cave paintings, bones, and other archaeological findings.

The prehistoric period is divided into three major phases:

(I). **Palaeolithic Age (Old Stone Age)** – The earliest period when humans used only stone tools.



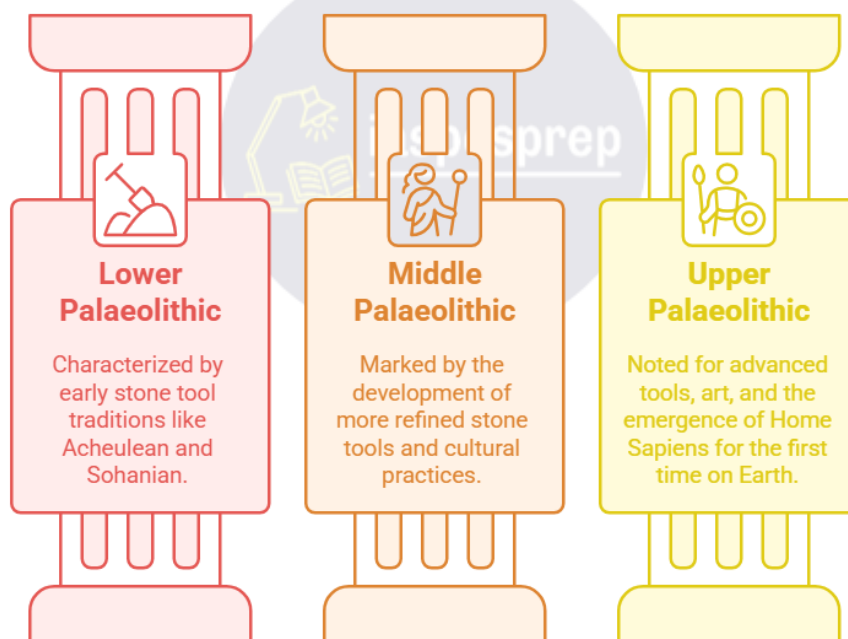
(II). **Mesolithic Age (Middle Stone Age)** – A transitional period where humans started domesticating animals and using advanced stone tools.

(III). **Neolithic Age (New Stone Age)** – A time when agriculture, permanent settlements, and pottery began.

(I). **Palaeolithic Age (Old Stone Age)** - (20 Lakh Years Ago to 10000 BCE)

- The word "Palaeolithic" comes from two Greek words:
 - "Palaeo" → meaning **Old**
 - "Lithos" → meaning **Stone**
- This period is called the **Old Stone Age** because early humans used **stone tools** for survival. It lasted from **2 million years ago to about 12,000 years ago**.
- It is further divided into **Lower Palaeolithic, Middle Palaeolithic, and Upper Palaeolithic**.

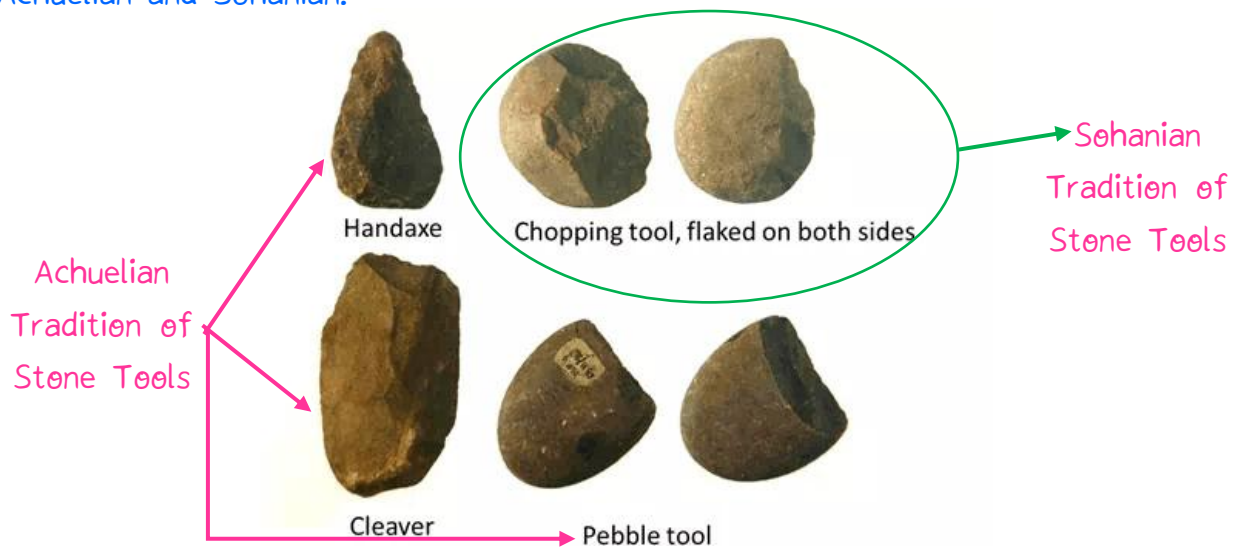
Evolution of Stone Tools and Culture in the Palaeolithic Age



Phase	Time Period	Main Features
Lower Palaeolithic	500,000 – 100,000 BCE	Hand axes, cleavers, and chopper tools
Middle Palaeolithic	100,000 – 40,000 BCE	Flake tools, scrapers, and borers
Upper Palaeolithic	40,000 – 10,000 BCE	Blades, advanced stone tools, rock art



- (1). Lower Palaeolithic Age (500000 - 100000 BCE):- The Lower Palaeolithic age is characterized by the emergence of 2 traditions of stone tools such as Achuelian and Sohanian.



❖ (a). Achuelian Tradition:-

- ✓ This tradition is identified with the use of Hand axes and Cleavers.
- ✓ Dr. Robert Bruce Foote had discovered the first Hand Axe from Pallavaram near Chennai in 1863 and subsequently Cleaver from Attirampakkam was also discovered.
- ✓ The sites of Achuelian tradition are missing in the Western Ghats, Coastal Areas and in the North-eastern part of India due to heavy rainfall.

❖ (b). Sohanian Tradition:-

- ✓ The Sohanian tradition is identified with Chopper and Chopping tools which were based upon the flaking technique.
- ✓ The sites of this tradition have been found mainly in the packet of the river bank of Sohan in today's Pakistan.
- ✓ Therefore, right from the beginning of the evolution of mankind in India there were the existence of multiple stone based cultures.

➤ (2). Middle Palaeolithic Age (100000 - 40000 BCE):-

- (a). In this phase, the **Homo-Habilis** was fully transformed into the **Homo-Erectus** (i.e. Bi-pedal Ape).



- (b). H.D. Sankalia had discovered various middle palaeolithic sites near Maharashtra. the river bank of Pravara located in Maharashtra.
- (c). The Flake industry was now well-established and the tools like scrapers, borers, points etc. were added into the list of stone tools.

➤ (3). Upper Palaeolithic Age (40000 – 10000 BCE):-

- (a). The Upper Palaeolithic age is known for the emergence of **Homo Sapiens** for the first time on the Earth as well as in India.
- (b). **Dr. Vishnu Wakankar** was the first who discovered the caves of Bhimbetka in Madhya Pradesh through which we came to know about the cave paintings for the first time.
- (c). Subsequently more than a dozen of caves were discovered in Bhimbetka from the Palaeolithic to Mesolithic era in the form of the Rock-paintings. Besides Bhimbetka caves like **Lakhu-diyar** (in Uttarakhand), **Azamgarh** (in Vindhyas) have also shown the evidences of rock-paintings and mesolithic art.



(II). Mesolithic Period (Middle Stone Age) - (10000 BCE to 8000 BCE)

- The Mesolithic period is identified with the following features:-
 - ✓ (a). **Homo Sapiens** were the chief architect of this culture in around **10000 BCE** in India.
 - ✓ (b). They learnt the art of use of fire for cooking food or baking milk and also warming themselves in the cold climatic conditions.
 - ✓ (c). **Microoliths** discovered by **C.L. Carlyle** were identified with this phase in the form of small and sharp stone tools designed on the geometric pattern.
 - ✓ (d). The transformation of early human being into a sedentary life or settled life have started from this era as the domestication of animals was practiced first by the people of mesolithic culture.
 - ✓ (e). There are some important sites like **Chopani Mande** (UP), **Mahadaha** (UP), **Damdama** (UP), **Ragore** (Rajasthan) and **Tilwara** (Rajasthan).





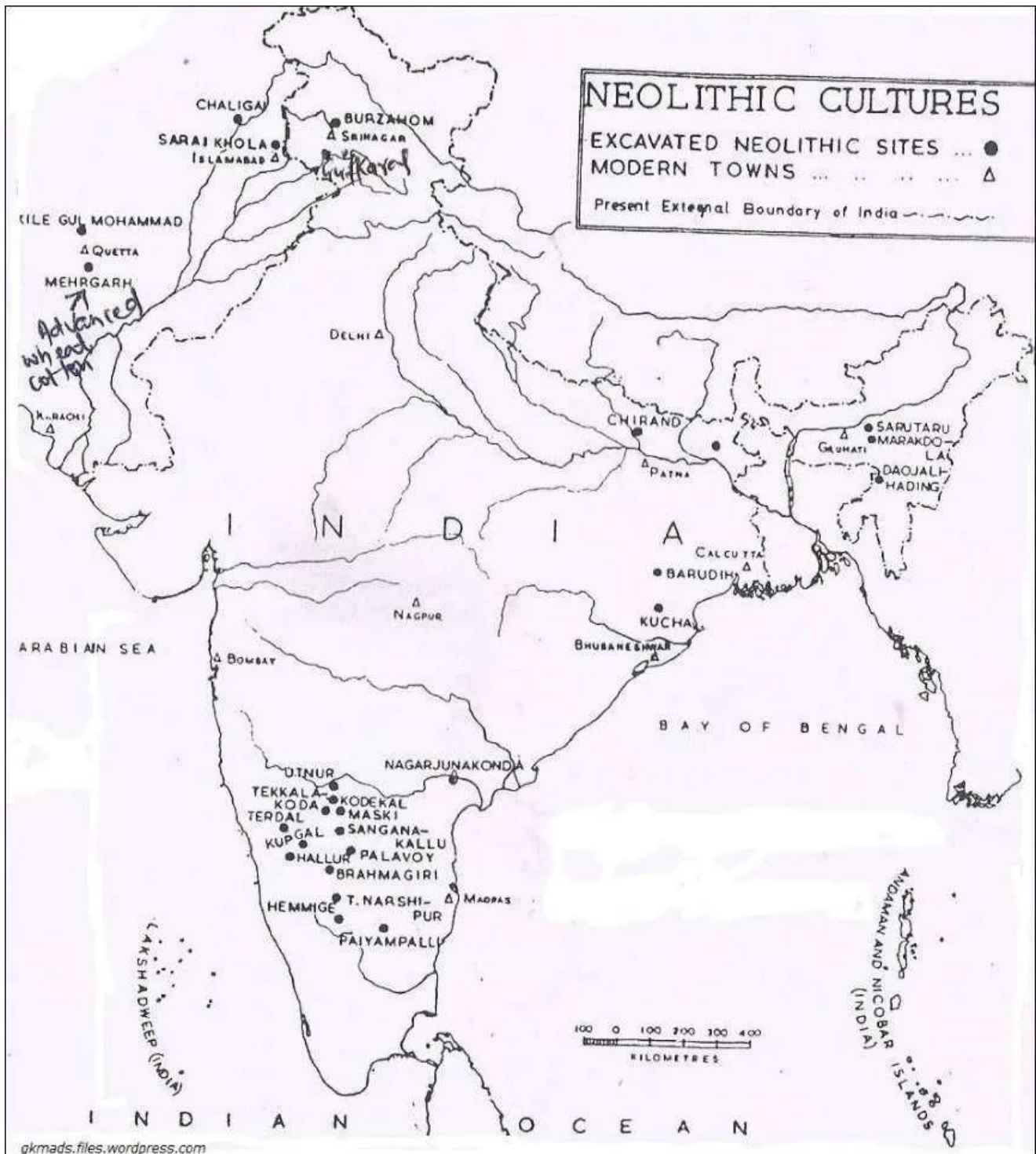
(III). Neolithic Period (New Stone Age) - (8000 BCE to 3000 BCE)

- The term "**Neolithic**" was coined by **John Lubbock**. It means the era of new stone age.
- This era has said to begun in the Indian Subcontinent from circa (approx) **8000 BCE onwards to 3000 BCE**.
- This era also witnessed a climatic transformation i.e. Pleistocene era (cold climatic) was changing into the Holocene era (warm climatic).
- **Homo-Sapiens Sapiens** (Modern Man) became the chief architect of the Neolithic culture which is identified on the basis of following features:-
 - ✓ (a). The beginning of Agriculture, **for e.g.**→ Mehargarh in the Belan Valley of Baluchistan in today's Pakistan is the oldest Agriculture site in the Indian Sub- continent shown the evidences of the cultivation of Wheat, Barley and Cotton (c. 7000 BCE).
 - ✓ (b). The people of this culture started living on a permanent piece of land. Therefore, the Pastoral hunter-gatherer society transformed into a settled society in this era. **For e.g.**→ The sites like Jericho (Jordan), Catal Huyuk (Turkey), Tepe Guran (Iran) have shown the evidences of the permanent settlement in West Asia as well.
 - ✓ (c). The emergence of large villages was also a chief characteristic of the neolithic culture.
 - ✓ (d). Pottery was invented for the first time in this era and a site of Chopani Mande in UP has given the earliest and the oldest evidence of Pottery (c. 6500 BCE).
 - ✓ (e). The neolithic culture has been found in various pockets of India indicating a massive transformation took place in this era. Therefore, **V. Gordon Childe** has termed it as the "**Neolithic Revolution**".
 - ✓ (f). The prominent sites of the Neolithic culture have been found in the Northwest and Southern part of India such as Mehargarh, Rana Ghundai, Sarai-khola in the Northwest and Utnur, Piklihal, T. Narsinpur, Paiyampalli etc. from South India.
 - ✓ (g). In the Eastern and North-eastern part of India, the sites of Belan Valley of UP such as Koldihawa, Mahagara, Chopani Mande are the prominent sites. In the North-eastern part of India, Daojali Hading in Assam is the most prominent neolithic site.





- ✓ (h). The Neolithic Age contributed in the emergence of various culture across the subcontinent like Burzahom and Gufkral belong to J&K have shown the evidences of the Pit-dwelling and domestication of dogs and other animals from the Neolithic culture. Therefore, there has always been variety of cultural practices followed even in the Neolithic era right from the beginning. It also paved way for the the emergence of Chalcolithic cultures from c. 5000 BCE onwards across the Indian Subcontinent such as Amri, Balathal, Rangpur, Kalibangan etc.





Some MCQs on Pre-Historic Period

Q1. According to the excavated evidence, the domestication of animals begun in-

- a) Lower Palaeolithic period
- b) Middle Palaeolithic period
- c) Upper Palaeolithic period
- d) Mesolithic period

Answer: (d) Mesolithic period

Explanation: The domestication of animals started in the Mesolithic period (Middle Stone Age). Archaeological evidence suggests that dogs were the first animals tamed by humans during this period. This phase marked the transition from a hunter-gatherer lifestyle to early forms of agriculture and animal husbandry.

Q2. Name the site which has revealed the earliest evidence of settled life?

- a) Dholavira
- b) Mehargarh
- c) Kile Gul Mohammad
- d) Kalibangan

Answer: (b) Mehargarh

Explanation: Mehargarh (situated in present-day Pakistan) is considered the earliest site showing evidence of settled life. Excavations at Mehargarh indicate that people practiced agriculture, domesticated animals, and used mud-brick houses as early as 7000 BCE, much before the Indus Valley Civilization.

Q3. Given below are the location of four archaeological sites in India:-

- (A) Paiyampalli
- (B) Bhimbetka
- (C) Hunsgi
- (D) Burzahom

Which among the following presents the correct order of their locations from North to South?

- a) A, B, C, D
- b) B, C, A, D
- c) B, D, A, C





d) D, B, C, A

Answer: (d) D, B, C, A

Explanation:

The correct order from North to South:

- Burzahom (Jammu & Kashmir) - North
- Bhimbetka (Madhya Pradesh) - Central India
- Hunsgi (Karnataka) - South India
- Paiyampalli (Tamil Nadu) - Further South

Thus, the correct order is D → B → C → A.

Q4. Which of the following is not a subdivision of the Stone Age?

a) Mesolithic Age

b) Iron Age

c) Palaeolithic Age

d) Neolithic Age

Answer: (b) Iron Age

Explanation:

The Stone Age is divided into three major phases:

1. Palaeolithic Age (Old Stone Age)
2. Mesolithic Age (Middle Stone Age)
3. Neolithic Age (New Stone Age)

The Iron Age is not part of the Stone Age; it came much later, after the Chalcolithic (Copper-Stone) Age.

Q5. Which of the following is NOT a characteristic of the Neolithic Age?

a) Introduction of agriculture and domestication of animals

b) Emergence of settled agricultural communities

c) Use of advanced metal tools

d) Development of pottery and weaving

Answer: (c) Use of advanced metal tools



**Explanation:**

The **Neolithic Age** was marked by:

- ✓ Agriculture and domestication of animals
- ✓ Permanent settlements
- ✓ Pottery and weaving

However, **advanced metal tools** were NOT used in the Neolithic period. Instead, **polished stone tools** were used. The use of **metals (copper, bronze, iron)** began in the **Chalcolithic and Iron Ages**.

Q6. Which hominid species is associated with the Lower Palaeolithic Period?

a) Homo erectus

b) Homo sapiens

c) Homo habilis

d) Australopithecus

Answer: (a) Homo erectus

Explanation:

- **Homo erectus** is associated with the **Lower Palaeolithic period** and is known for using **stone tools and fire**.
- **Homo habilis** was an earlier species but mainly used crude stone tools.
- **Homo sapiens** appeared much later, in the **Upper Palaeolithic period**.
- **Australopithecus** was even older and mostly found in Africa.

Thus, the correct answer is **Homo erectus**.

