Early Humans–1

Humans have evolved greatly through the millions of years that mark their existence on earth. In the early stages, they were hunter-gatherers and nomads. Always on the move, they travelled from one place to another in search of food, water and shelter. They hunted wild animals and gathered fruits, roots, nuts and seeds. When the resources of plant and animal food got exhausted in one area, they moved to another.

Early humans lived a primitive life. They did not wear anything during summers. During the winter season, they used animal skins, the barks of trees and leaves to keep themselves warm. Nights were generally spent up in trees, or in caves and rock shelters.

The Stone Age

The Stone Age can be divided into three periods of study, based on the type and quality of stone tools that early humans used.

- **Palaeolithic or Old Stone Age**: This period lasted from early times till about 10000 BCE, that is, till about 12,000 years ago. It is further divided into Early (Lower), Middle and Late (Upper) Palaeolithic. Humans used crude stone tools during this period.

- **Mesolithic or Middle Stone Age**: This period lasted from about 10000 BCE till about 8000 BCE. Stone tools of this period are called microliths. They were smaller, sharper and more efficient than the tools of the Palaeolithic period. Apart from stone, animal bones and horns were also used to make tools. Older varieties of crude stone tools, however, continued to be used during this period.

- **Neolithic or New Stone Age**: This period lasted from about 8000 BCE till about 4000 BCE. The New Stone Age tools were a further improvement on the earlier variety of tools. These tools were much sharper than the ones used in the Mesolithic period. They were also polished to sparkle. A large number of axes, sickles, spears and arrowheads have been found from Neolithic sites in India and other parts of the world.

Sites

Evidences of hunter-gatherers have been found...
Early humans lived in caves and in rock shelters.

Human remains discovered at many places. Generally, these evidences are in the form of stone tools, some finished and some unfinished. These places are called ‘sites’. A few sites have been marked out in the map on this page. You will notice that some of them are near rivers. Humans generally settled close to rivers so that they could get a sufficient supply of water.

**To do** Try to find out a few more sites in India, where early humans settled. Mark and label them on a separate map.

### Humans make tools

A large number of tools belonging to the three Stone Age periods have been found at many
places. Most of them are of stone, since stone was easily available.

In the beginning, humans searched for stones which could be used as tools. Later, they started making crude stone tools for specific needs. Flint, a type of stone, was widely used to make tools and weapons. Since flint chips easily, it could be moulded into different shapes easily. Early humans chipped flint and other stones till they acquired the desired shape.

Both big and small stones were used to make tools and weapons. The bigger ones were shaped into axe-heads, hammers and choppers. The axe-head was tied to a stick which made it a more efficient tool. The smaller pieces of stone were sharpened and used as knives and scrapers. Still smaller stones were given a sharp point and tied to arrows and spears. These were used to hunt animals.

Techniques of tool making Early humans used two techniques to make stone tools.

- Stone on stone—In this, the stone to be shaped into a tool was held in one hand. Another stone was held in the other hand. The second stone was used to strike the first, till the first stone acquired the desired shape.

- Pressure flaking—In this, the stone to be chipped was placed on a firm surface such as a rock. A stone sharpened from one end was kept on the first stone. Then another stone was struck hard on the blunt surface of the second stone. This was done till the first stone was of the desired shape.

uses The stone tools were used to cut trees, scrape the barks of trees, dig the ground, hunt animals and skin them, stitch animal skins to make clothes and to chop meat, fruits and wood.

Humans discover fire
One of the greatest discoveries made by early humans was of fire. It will never be known how it happened. Perhaps two flints were rubbed together accidentally and the sparks fell on some dry leaves lying nearby. Or perhaps lightning struck a tree, and it went up in flames.

Over a period of time, humans learned the uses of fire. It provided light and kept them warm. Early humans kept a fire burning at the entrance of their caves to scare away wild animals. They also found that fire could be used to cook food. This may have happened accidentally. A piece of raw meat might have fallen into fire and got roasted. It would have tasted good, and humans may have started cooking their food after that.

early rock paintings
Many caves have paintings on their walls. Early humans perhaps painted these to express their feelings. They may also have been done on ceremonial occasions. Can you think of other reasons?
A prehistoric rock painting from the rock shelter at Bhimbetka

is famous for prehistoric rock paintings. There are over 750 rock shelters here, nearly 500 of which have paintings. The paintings depict scenes from everyday life—of men hunting (either alone or in groups), riding, dancing, performing religious rituals; of women grinding and preparing food; of children running, jumping, playing and so on. A large number of animals have also been painted, most of them in great detail.

The colours used in the paintings are red, green, white and ochre. The paints were perhaps made by grinding various rocks and minerals till they became powder. They were then mixed with water and some sticky substance, such as resin from trees.

The Hunsgi and Baichbal valley in the Deccan also have many Stone Age sites. If both the large and the small ones are taken into account, the number would cross 200. Many finished and unfinished stone tools have been found here. It appears that early humans lived here over a very long period of time.

The stone tools found from the prehistoric sites of the Deccan are an important link with the past. Archaeologists are studying these tools carefully to find out how they were used. In this way they would be able to understand how early humans lived, what they ate and how they overcame the harsh living conditions of those times.

The DeccAn

Many prehistoric sites have been excavated in the Deccan. Some of these are in Bori, Morgaon, Chirki-Nevasa, Isampur, Gunore, Saswad Nasre, Yedurwadi and Attirampakkam. All these sites are characterized by the discovery of stone tools—hand-axes, choppers, cleavers and scrapers, among other tools.
To Sum Up

- Early humans were initially hunter-gatherers. They lived by hunting and food-gathering. They moved frequently from one place to another.
- The Stone Age is divided into three periods—Old, Middle and New Stone Age.
- Early humans made tools of stone. They chipped stones so that they could be used as tools. These stone tools were used for different tasks.
- The discovery of fire made life easier.
- Early humans painted on cave walls and in rock shelters. Bhimbetka has many such paintings.
- Hunsgi is an important prehistoric site in the Deccan. A large number of stone tools have been discovered here.