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A CONCEPT OF PRE- HISTORIC INDIA

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Abstract: History is a systematic record of man from the past to the present. How man originated, lived and worked in the past is the subject matter of history. The history of a country is a picture of its past and it cannot be understood without some knowledge of its geography. The history of the people is greatly influenced by the geography and environment of the region in which they live. The Indian subcontinent is gifted with different regions with their distinct geographical features which have greatly affected the course of its history. Geographically speaking the Indian subcontinent in ancient times included the present day India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Pakistan. This Paper deals with the various issues in prehistoric India.

Keywords: Originated, Past , Geography, Environment, Features, Affected.

Introduction: The history of mankind is very old. Regarding the Pre-history and Proto-history due to lack of sources, it is very difficult to ascertain as to wherefrom man appeared on the earth at first. With the help of science and efforts taken by many historians and scholars of science have traced the origin and the progress of primitive life of early man .

Hominids and early humans first appeared in East Africa millions of years ago. Homo sapiens emerged in East Africa between 100,000 and 400,000 years ago. Homo sapiens migrated from Africa to Eurasia, Australia, and the Americas. Early humans were hunters and gatherers whose survival depended on the availability of wild plants and animals.

Archaeologists study past cultures by locating and analyzing human remains, fossils, and artifacts.-Archaeologists apply scientific tests such as carbon dating to analyze fossils and artifacts.

A study of human life and culture is known as Anthropology. It is an auxiliary science which helps to understand history. The remains of ancient plants and animals are known as fossils. By studying fossils archaeologists and anthropologists can learn about what people ate, what animals they had around, and their way of life.

Carbon dating: Carbon dating can be used to date organic artifacts, or things that were once alive. All living things contain a radioactive isotope of Carbon called Carbon 14 which they absorb from the sun while they are alive. Carbon 14 has a half-life of 5000 years. That means it

takes 5,000 years for half of the Carbon 14 in something to break down. If we know how much Carbon 14 something has left we can count back to how much is had to begin with to determine the age of the artifact. Is limited to things 50,000 years old or less .

Ice Age: About 1.6 million years ago, many places around the world began to experience long periods of freezing weather, called the ice ages. The ice ages ended about 10,000 years ago. Huge sheets of ice covered much of the earth's land. Many areas that are now underwater were then dry land. A land bridge, or strip of land connecting two continents, probably connected Asia and North America. Migration of Homo-Sapiens –Theory Modern Human Beings Believed to have appeared in Africa between 150,000-200,000 years ago . Began to migrate outside of Africa 100,000 years ago . Believed by many to have replaced the Neanderthals by 30,000 B. C . By 10,000 B.C. Homo Sapiens Sapiens could be found throughout the world due to migration.

There are two theories for this migration: One is the “out of Africa” model which states that homo sapiens sapiens migrated out of Africa and slowly replaced other groups they encountered throughout the world.

The other theory is the multiregional model, which states that development from earlier hominids to modern humans occurred in different locations in Africa, Asia, and Europe at different times.

Settling New Lands: Early hominids migrated from Africa to Asia about 2 million years ago. They eventually spread to India, China, Southeast Asia, and Europe. Humans began to migrate to South Asia around 100,000 years ago. From South Asia, they moved to Europe, North Asia, and then North America. By 9000 BC, humans lived on all continents except Antarctica.

Prehistory: The earth is over 4000 million years old and the man appeared on the earth in the early Pleistocene stage, which lasted between 2.50 lakh B.C. to 10,000 B.C. Much work has to be done on pre-historic period of Indian history. The past of humanity began long ago. Most of it went unrecorded and this unwritten past constitutes prehistory. But a small fraction of the past was recorded or written down it is known as history.

Prehistory is everything that happened before written records. Technique of writing was developed in different places in world at different times. This means that, technically, the dates for prehistory vary around the world. Historians using the term Prehistory are generally referring to time before the very first human writing. Although there is some overlapping in some parts of the world, prehistory is roughly equivalent to the Stone Age. The dates used by historians and

archaeologists typically refer to the earliest time that some turning point occurred. For example, the Sumerians of Mesopotamia developed writing thousands of years before writing was used by European tribes.

Sir Daniel Wilson a Scottish –born Canadian archaeologist published “The Archaeology and Prehistoric Annals of Scotland” in 1851 and introduced the word Prehistory into the English archaeological vocabulary; probably translated it from the Danish word “forhistorie”.

Africa is said to be the cradle of human race. Anthropologists have unearthed the oldest human skeletons in East Africa, in places such as Hadar, Olduvai, Laetoli, etc. One of the best preserved human remains is a female skeleton found at Hadar in Ethiopia. Mary and Louis Leakey found bones of early ancestors of humans, called hominids, in East Africa. “Lucy” was found by Donald Johanson. Tests showed that she lived more than 3 million years ago and walked on two legs. Anthropologist assembled about 40% of the young girl that was given the nickname “Lucy”. Lucy belongs to the Australopithecus category.

First Paleolithic evidence in India: In 1863, Young British geologist, Robert Bruce Foote discovered and identified the first Paleolithic tool (Hand axe) in the subcontinent, and established the science of prehistory in India. He documented hundreds of prehistoric sites in Southern and Western India, and attempted to put forward hypotheses on past environments and ancient life ways.

Hathnora evidence: There was no equivocal evidence of the occurrence of a true hominid fossil anywhere in the Indian subcontinent. This is in sharp contrast with the number of such finds in east Sothern Africa, Europe and some parts of Asia . The discovery of such fossil at Hathnora (near Hoshangabad in M.P) in the Narmada valley by a geologist in 1982, put the subcontinent on the global map of hominid fossil finds.

Prehistoric period means the earliest period of the history of mankind. This period is also called as 'Stone Age'. A hint of the earliest presence is indicated by stone tools obtained from various Indian sites, except the plains of Indus, Ganga and Yamuna rivers. The early man in India used crude stone tools.

On the basis of the quality of the stone tools used by early man, the earliest settlers have been divided into three classes viz. Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic. These three ages of stone were followed by the three ages of metals, such as copper, Bronze and Iron. The Stone Age is divided into three parts-Paleolithic age, Mesolithic age and Neolithic age,

Paleolithic culture: The term Paleolithic is derived from two Greek words meaning old stone. This name is applied to the earliest people, as the only evidence of their existence is furnished by a number of crude stone implements. Man has made slow but steady progress in the prehistoric times. In the beginning, he made rough and crude tools and implements of hard stone called quartzite. These tools were made up of a species of hard rock called “quartzite”, hence the Paleolithic men in India are also known as “Quartzite men.” The Paleolithic age in India is divided into three phases, according to the nature of the stone stools used by the people and also according to the nature of change in climate.

Lower Paleolithic culture: The first phase is called as early or lower Paleolithic (broadly placed between 2, 50,000 B.C. and 1, 00,000 B.C.). The early Paleolithic men did not settle in forest, as it was difficult for them to clear these forests with their crude stone tools. Early Paleolithic sites are found in the valley of the Soan ,Belaan, Thar desert and Kashmir. The important characteristic feature of lower Paleolithic is the use of hand axe, cleavers and choppers were used for chopping, skinning and digging .

Middle Paleolithic culture: The Middle Paleolithic industries are mainly based upon flakes – which are found in different parts of India and show regional variations (between 1, 00,000 B.C. and 40,000 B.C.). The principal tools are varieties of blades, points, borers, scrapers, burins and cores made of flakes. Scholars also find a large number of borers and blade-like tools. The geographical horizon of the Middle Paleolithic sites coincides roughly with that of the Lower Paleolithic sites.

Upper Paleolithic culture: The Upper Paleolithic phase was less humid (between 40,000 B.C. and 10,000 B.C.). It coincided with the last phase of the Ice Age when climate became comparatively warm. In the world context, it marks the appearance of new flint industries and of modern men (Homo Sapiens). In India, scholars notice the use of blades and burins, which have been found in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Central Madhya Pradesh, southern Uttar Pradesh, and south Bihar Plateau and in the upper levels of the Gujarat Dunes. Caves and rock shelters for use by human beings in this phase have been discovered at Bhimbetka (M.P.) south of Bhopal. Thus it appears that Paleolithic sites are found in many hilly slopes and river valleys of the country; they are absent in the alluvial plains of the Indus and the Ganga.

Concluding Remarks: The Paleolithic research in India got a boost only with the coming of Yale Cambridge Expedition in 1935 led by De Terra and Patterson. Paleolithic man lived in

groups called clans. He lived in groups called clans of about 20-30 people, used caves for shelter. These clans got their food by Hunting and Gathering. They ate flesh of animals, fruits, nuts etc. They moved from place to place they were Nomadic. He wandered from place to place in search of food and shelter and invented the first tools and weapons including simple stone tools. He made rough and crude tools and implements of hard stone called quartzite. Paleolithic men in India are also known as “Quartzite men.” The art of making tools were rough and in crude form, axes, arrow heads, spears, probably used for self-defense and hunting etc. From excavation no tomb was found, this indicates that Paleolithic man had no knowledge of burial or disposal of dead bodies. Man had this period no knowledge of fire or metals. Racially this man had Negroid or Negrito features. Man of this period covered their body with leaves of trees, barks, and skin of animals to protect themselves from cold. Bori caves in Maharashtra and Pallavaram are the Paleolithic sites in India.

As agriculture spread different areas began to grow different crops that were suited to their environment. These places where people began to settle down, grow crops, and start villages became known as the Cradles of Civilization. Most of these areas were in river valleys. This first was Mesopotamia between the Tigris and Euphrates River Valleys. Other river valleys include The Nile in Egypt, the Indus in India, and the Huang He in China. These villages spread throughout Europe and the rest of the world. The oldest and largest of the villages are found in South West Asia.

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