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Ancient and Medieval Societies

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By: P.R. Tiwari



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**Sample Preview
of the
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QUESTION PAPER

June – 2023

(Solved)

ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL SOCIETIES

M.H.I.-1

Time: 3 Hours]

[Maximum Marks: 100

Note: Answer any **five** questions. Attempt at least **two** questions from each section. All questions carry equal marks.

SECTION-I

Q. 1. What do you understand by domestication of plants? Give an account of spread of agriculture.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-3, Page No. 13, 'Domestication of Plants' and Page No. 14, 'Early Agricultural Sites'.

Q. 2. Write a note on the process of urbanization in the Bronze Age.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-7, Page No. 37, 'Urbanism'.

Q. 3. Analyse the transition to democracy in ancient Greek civilization.

Ans. Since the basic issue of landownership was not resolved under Solon's reforms, new rounds of social turmoil and conflict started in Athens after some decades. This created conditions of anarchy which led to staging of a coup and assumption of power by a person named Peisistratus. His first attempt in 561 B.C. failed and he had to run away. But he succeeded in 545 B.C. He became the supreme ruler of the city, challenging the constitutional structure and defying oligarchy. It completely changed the character of government in Athens. Peisistratus died in 527 B.C. and was followed by his son Hippias. The attempt to transform tyranny into dynastic rule resulted in a lot of bitterness among the people. He was overthrown in 510 B.C. paving the way of advent of democracy in Athens. It also marked the start of classical democracy at Greece.

What happened in Athens is just an example. In other Greek city-states of the Archaic period too, comparable state of affairs existed as reforms were either incomplete or were not undertaken at all. The series of coups and assumption of dictatorial powers by individuals totally altered the nature of numerous Greek states. As a result, oligarchies in which the ruling power was monopolized by a few families on a traditional

hereditary basis were overthrown by popular revolts. Those who came to power were generally from the poor peasant families. They were termed 'tyrants' but they had wide popular backing. Throughout the Greece the tyrannies were a widespread political institution.

Also Ref.: See Chapter-12, Page No. 66, 'Transition to Democracy' and Page No. 67, 'Democratic Political Structure: Emergence of Deme'.

Q. 4. Give a comparative account of the polity, economy and religion of the Inkas and Aztecs.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-14, Page No. 81, 'The Inkas' and Page No. 82, 'The Aztecs'.

Q. 5. Write short notes on the following:

(i) Assyrian Empire

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-10, Page No. 52, 'The Assyrian Empire'.

(ii) Social Orders and their conflict in Roman Empire

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-13, Page No. 73, 'Social Orders and the Senate' and Page No. 74, 'Conflicts and Expansion'.

(iii) Shang Civilization

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-6, Page No. 33, 'The Shang Civilization of Northern and Central China'.

(iv) Sources for the study of early human societies

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-1, Page No. 2, 'The Major Aspects of Study'.

SECTION-II

Q. 6. Analyse the two phases of Feudalism in Europe. List the major changes in economy during the second phase of Feudalism.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-22, Page No. 138, Q. No. 1 and Page No. 139, Q. No. 5.

Q. 7. Discuss craft production in medieval period. How was the production organised?

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-27, Page No. 168, 'Textile Production', Page No. 169, 'Pottery, Porcelain and Ceramics', 'Glass Making' and Page No. 171, Q. No. 3.

Q. 8. What do you understand by protestantism? Trace its growth.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-29, Page No. 182, 'Martin Luther and the Birth of Protestantism' and Page No. 183, 'Growth of Protestantism'.

Q. 9. Discuss the pattern of distribution of population in medieval Europe. How did plague affect it?

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-31, Page No. 202, Q. No. 2 and Q. No. 3.

Q. 10. Write short notes on the following:

(i) Armenian merchants

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-25, Page No. 154, 'Armenians'.

(ii) The role of gun powder and firearms in medieval warfare

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-33, Page No. 211, 'Gunpowder Revolution' and Page No. 212, 'Use of Firearms and Military Tactics'.

(iii) Portuguese trade in Indian Ocean

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-24, Page No. 148, 'Portuguese Trade in the Indian Ocean'.

(iv) Family in medieval Europe

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-34, Page No. 217, 'Introduction' and 'Transition in Families and Kinship Pattern in Late Medieval Europe'.



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Sample Preview of The Chapter

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ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL SOCIETIES

EARLY HUMAN SOCIETIES

1

Hunting and Gathering

INTRODUCTION

The process of development of modern man has taken millions of years since *Hominids* started hunting and gathering. The period of living as hunter-gatherer is estimated to be around 98 per cent of human existence on earth. During this long period of time evolution took place mainly in two ways: One, affected by man in his surroundings and way of living, and two, affected by nature in physical features and biological forms. As stones were the main tools used by man, the hunting-gathering period is known as Paleolithic Period. It is divided in different stages on the basis of advance in making tools, means of subsistence and habitation sites, etc.

CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

EVOLUTION OF MODERN HUMANS

There has been a long process of evolution of modern humans (*Homo Sapiens Sapiens*). Many species of genus *Homo* evolved from the *Hominids* (two-legged primates having all forms of humans). The significant fact is that *Hominids* were two-legged which means their forelimbs were free for other activities as legs bore the weight of the body.

The study of human evolution usually includes other *Hominids*. The period of evolution from 3.5 million years to 1.5 million years was marked by dichotomy between Australopithecines and *Homo* from which the genus *Homo* had diverged. These include *Homo erectus*, which lived from one and a half million years to around three hundred thousands years ago when *Homo Sapiens* began to emerge.

Unlike *Homo habilis* whose bones have been found only in Africa, the evidence for the presence of *Homo erectus* has been found in Europe and various parts of

Asia. The characteristics include backwards sloped forehead, prominent brow-ridges, and brain smaller than the size of a *Homo sapiens* brain but larger than *Homo habilis*. The evolution of *Homo sapiens* again was by way of a slow process in different periods in various parts of the world. The process of evolution was not linear but complex and variegated. A number of sub-species emerged in various parts of different continents. They were: (i) *Homo habilis*, (ii) *Homo erectus*, (iii) *Homo sapiens Neanderthalensis*, (iv) *Homo sapiens sapiens*.

All through the long periods when *Homo erectus* inhabited various pockets, a number of species of *Homo sapiens* also evolved. One of the most extensive was *Homo Neanderthalensis*. They were discovered in all parts of Europe. There were many like them which existed around 400000 years. In actual fact, numerous variations among species occurred between 400000 to 100000 years ago. In some of them the distinctiveness of *Homo erectus* were more pronounced, while some other were akin to *Neanderthals* and some others were mixed which could be grouped in either of the two species. Later, around 100000 years ago in Middle Paleolithic Period in all the regions they came to acquire peculiar resemblance with *Neanderthals*. This means they had a short and stout body, absent chin, protruding brow-ridges, and a narrow forehead.

The disappearance of *Neanderthals* marks the last phase of Paleolithic Age. The following phase is known as Upper paleolithic period. This period is marked by emergence of various cultures in different times with distinct regional and geographical characteristics. They include: (i) Aurignacian which emerged from 34000 to 30000 years ago; (ii) Solutrean which lasted from 22000

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to 18000 years ago; and (iii) Magdalenian which appeared around 18000 years ago and existed up to 11000 years ago.

Among them many changes in physical features and biological form, mention can be made of increase in the size of cranial capacity or volume of brain. While in Australopithecus it was around 400-500 cc, it increased to 700 cc in *Homo habilis* and 900 to 1100 cc in *Homo erectus*. The brain volume of modern humans is between 1250-1450 cc.

STUDY OF HUNTING GATHERING CULTURES

Before the dawn of agriculture gathering food from the plants and hunting were the ways of survival. Numerous relics from the pre-historic sites have been discovered by scholars during the last century.

The Major Aspects of Study

The pre-historic sites in various regions of the world have helped in learning and exploring different facets of life of hunters and gatherers of the period. The key facets to understand their way of life are:

1. The alterations in the body and anatomy of different species that evolved from *Homo habilis* to modern humans;
2. The parts of the world populated by hunting-gathering groups;
3. The availability of kind of food and tools for obtaining their every day requirements and subsistence;
4. The alterations in their tools which took place during 3 million years of their evolution;
5. When and how did they found out the benefits and methods to use fire;
6. The character of their social groups and contact and relations among them;
7. The ways of messages among individual and groups;
8. What did they do with deceased bodies;
9. How did they shield their young offsprings;
10. What varieties of art did they have, if any.

Question of Periodisation and Spread of Early Cultures

The hunting and gathering phase lasted for around 2.5 million years. This long period has been divided on ground of the tools used by people and other aspects of their life.

On the basis of tools and other available information the all pre-historic phases have been classified into two periods: (i) Paleolithic, and (ii) Neolithic. It should be noted that the division is named on the basis of tools that were used during those times: paleo – old, lithic – stone. Neolithic (Neo–New) is the period when production of food rather than the gathering turned out to be the main form of living.

Traditionally, the Paleolithic Period is divided into three (somewhat overlapping) periods: the Lower Paleolithic, Middle Paleolithic, and the Upper Paleolithic.

The three ages mark technological and cultural advances in human communities. While the Lower Paleolithic period lasted for more than two million years, the Middle Paleolithic Period is estimated to start three hundred thousands years ago.

The Upper Paleolithic period started around 40,000-30,000 years ago. Its beginning was different in various parts of the world. Many cultures of diverse nature, different kinds of tools and regional characteristics based on geographic location thrived within this period. The Upper Paleolithic Period had three significant stages:

- (a) Aurignacian (34000 to 30000 years ago),
- (b) Solutrean (22000 to 18000 years ago), and
- (c) Magdalenian (18000 to 11000 years ago).

An intermediary phase of Mesolithic culture also flourished between the end of the Upper Paleolithic period and the Neolithic Period. It is also called the final Paleolithic phase of the hunting and gathering cultures.

The spread of early human culture took place alongside the origin and evolution of *Homo sapiens* as a distinct species from other hominids and great apes. The study of human evolution encompasses many scientific disciplines. The term “human” in the context of human evolution refers to the genus *Homo*, it is estimated that humans branched off from their common ancestor with chimpanzees – the only other living hominins – about 5–7 million years ago. Several species of *Homo* evolved and are now extinct. These include *Homo erectus*, *Homo habilis*, and *Homo Neanderthalensis* among others. The study of human evolution usually includes other hominids, such as the Australopithecines, from which the genus *Homo* had diverged by about 2.6 million years ago in Africa.

The period which is marked by the use of stones as a tool is known as Stone Age or Paleolithic period. It extends from the introduction of stone tools by *Hominids* such as *Homo habilis* around 3 million years ago, to the introduction of agriculture around 10000 B.C. Before advancing to agricultural stage, all human species used to subsist by hunting and gathering. They used stones to hunt the animals and to gather plant food. This means that the evolution of humankind from early members of the genus *Homo* such as *Homo habilis* to modern *Homo sapiens* took place during the Paleolithic era. The climate during the Paleolithic consisted of a set of glacial and interglacial periods in which melting glaciers cause catastrophic flooding and the climate periodically fluctuated between warm and cool temperatures. The last glacial phase ended around 10,000 B.C., and a warm period started which continues even today.

DEVELOPMENT OF TOOLS

The tools which the pre-historic man used were none other than stones. Tools are defined as human made objects used to perform manual work. Going by this definition those which were used just by picking up and throwing

are not counted as tools, simply because they cannot be recognized, though in pre-historic times humans must have used them. The pieces of stones which were worked upon to make them sharp-edged or to give them a particular shape, have been found at many places and identified as belonging to pre-historic period.

Lower Palaeolithic: Oldovian and Acheulian Tools

The oldest known stone tools were used 1.8 to 1.6 million years ago by *Homo habilis*. They are called Oldovian tools on the basis of the site where they were first found in North Tanzania (Olduvai) and in Ethiopia (Melka Kunture). These tools were generally made from the locally available stones and had little modification in their natural form. They were made by providing it a cutting edge and utilized to dig roots, to cut plants and to skin meat of small animals. The diet of *Homo habilis* did not have much meat as there is no proof of their being able to kill big animals.

Some other tools are called Acheulian tools on the basis of site of St. Acheul (northern France) where they were found. Starting from around 1.4 million years ago these tools were used for a very long period of time. These tools were used to chop, cut, pierce and pound. They also included hand axes which were pear shaped with a pointed end and a broad end to hold them. Sphere-shaped tools were meant to hit the legs of the animals and to capture them.

Middle Palaeolithic: Mousterian Tools

The tools of the Middle Paleolithic period reveal advance from core tools. They are named after Le Moustier, a rock shelter in the Dordogne region of France. These Mousterian tools were developed between 300,000 and 30,000 B.P. They are also found in West Asia and North Africa. Some major finds of Middle Paleolithic Period stone tools in Asia and Europe reveal that they were being used by both *Homo sapiens* and *Neanderthals*.

The tools from Middle Paleolithic sites have been studied by scholars and categorized into five main particular kits on the basis of their use as scrapers, borers, knives, blades, burins etc. Another significant aspect is that in addition to stones, animal bones, ivory, horns and wood were also used in making the tools. Some tools had sharp points hardened with fire which shows that they were meant to be used as spears to hunt large animals.

Upper Paleolithic Tools

The industry of tool making scaled new heights in Upper Paleolithic period. During this period the *Homo sapiens sapiens* perfected the skill of blade making by giving its edge a regular shape to serve as knife. They attained numerous other successes in their tool making business such as the employing materials other than stones, composite tools, tools meant for fishing and use of tools for producing tools. They not only made a large range of tools like pins, needles, awls and hammers but also developed tools with spear points which could be used from a distance.

Upper Paleolithic tools exhibit greater complexity, specialization, and variety of applications and the emergence of distinctive regional traditions. It is believed that the new technology generated a population explosion of modern humans and this led to the extinction of the *Neanderthals*. Some concrete examples of advance include specialization of tools, use of jewellery and images (such as cave drawings), organisation of living space, rituals (for example, burials with grave gifts), specialized hunting techniques, exploration of less hospitable geographical areas and barter trade networks.

HABITATION AND WAY OF LIFE

As one tries to learn about the more ancient time, scarcity of material becomes a big problem. For example, hardly anything is known about the dwellings and size of lower Paleolithic groups of *Homo habilis*. Their main food must have come from plants and hunting of small animals which were probably eaten in raw form. Technical advances included significant developments in flint tools having fine blades rather than simpler and shorter flakes. The use of bow and arrow was refined. Hunting was no more limited to small animals. The movement to nearby areas became a routine for hunting and gathering more variety of food.

Use of fire and making dwellings began from the period of *Homo erectus* who used to live in groups of 25-30 people and had a certain life-style and some rudimentary social relations. Discovery and use of fire had a lot of impact on food consumption and way of life during the Paleolithic Period. They lived either in natural caves or dwellings made from tree branches and covering of skins. They subsisted on gathering of plant food and hunting and ate cooked meat.

The findings of their burial sites show that the dead were disposed off or buried by other members of the groups. Generally, the burials were in small narrow channels dug into the earth. Studies of burial sites in Europe, Africa and Asia have found that one-third of buried were children and a few were women which points out care and emotional bonds of the community.

Information about the Upper Paleolithic Period is not that much scarce. This period has the earliest remains of organised settlements in the form of camp sites, some with storage pits. These were often located in narrow valley bottoms, possibly to make hunting easier of passing herds of animals. Human habitats in caves have been found in the Caspian Sea region and in England. Groups of people started exchanging of goods. In some regions the cultivation of wheat started around 10,000 B.C.

ARTS AND COMMUNICATION

Works of arts in the form of cave painting and petroglyphs have been found at the places of hunting-gathering societies. Those from the Middle Paleolithic Period include engravings, markings and colouring of bones and polishing some object. The colours were obtained by natural mineral pigments of manganese oxide,

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ochre and applied through fingers, some sticks or brush like objects. Some sort of binding material and even charcoal were also applied.

Artistic work blossomed during Upper Paleolithic Period, with Venus figurines, cave painting, and petroglyphs. The carvings and paintings either have animals or shapes and symbols. Palaeolithic items are represented by artifacts from the Caucasus, Crimea, Russian steppes, Siberia and Altai. These are characteristic stone implements 500,000 to 350,000 years old excavated in Armenia, the Kuban and Altai regions and in the vicinity of the River Dniester. Varied artistic objects from the Stone Age were also found in Malta and Maininsk in Siberia and Kostenky Settlements of River Don.

Decorated tools of bones, horns or stones have also been found. Some adorned objects look like ornaments to be worn on arms, wrists, neck or feet. The adornment is done by colouring, engraving and giving specific shapes to them.

The meaning of these carvings and paintings and the objective of drawing them have been interpreted in many ways by pre-historic scholars. These interpretations range from a form of magic designed to ensure success to simple doodling. The use of symbols may be a form of communication which means existence of groups familiar with them. The shapes and symbols may be a way of information exchange as the languages were unknown in the Paleolithic periods. Before the development of languages, capability of speaking was essential. Neither *Homo habilis* nor *Homo erectus* was capable of speaking many sounds and their nuances as is evident from the structure of thorax. More or less the same was the case with *Neanderthals*. Only the *Homo sapiens sapiens* in Upper Palaeolithic Period attained the skill of speech like the modern humans.

SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Q. 1. How does archaeology helps us in knowing about early cultures?

Ans. Archaeology helps us in knowing about the earlier cultures through the study of material ruins of the past. For archeological exploration the selection of sites is very important. Earlier the sites were selected on the basis of oral traditions, mythological references, finds of certain items on the surface due to soil erosion, etc. but now modern scientific methods are employed to indicate the sites of human habitation in the past.

The methods of exploration include collecting the artifacts and material remains, analyzing them within the immediate environs, and suggesting theories by making comparative analysis of the artifacts and material remains. Everything found on the site is of relevance for the archaeologists and may include stone tools, fragments of bones (both human and animal), pieces of wood, structures of dwellings and charcoal.

During excavations there is always a possibility of finding artifacts from various layers of the same site. This generally happens when the same site is used and inhabited repeatedly by the succeeding generations. Many a time the material remains may not be neatly available in different layers and there might be overlapping and mix-up of the available artifacts in different layers.

Hence, in the archaeological context the objects excavated at the lowest stratum are the earliest and on the upper levels the latest. This is the reason why Paleolithic Period is classified as Lower Paleolithic and Upper Paleolithic.

Q. 2. Give a brief account of the periodisation of Paleolithic cultures.

Ans. In the process of human evolution hunting and gathering cultures existed for quite a long time, around 2.5 million years. Such a long period of the phase of evolution known as Stone Age covers more than 98% of the total period of human history. This is considered as pre-history because there are no written accounts available for it.

The entire period is divided into two phases, Paleolithic and Neolithic. This division is based on the kinds of tools used and whatever other information could be collected by archaeological excavations and other means. The stone tools used during prolonged Paleolithic period underwent numerous alterations with passage of time such as the types of stone used, their shape and the aim of using them. Besides, some other materials like wood, bones, horns, etc. were also used alongside the stones. i.e. wood, bones and others. Depending on the tool types, the human species and other cultural traits the Paleolithic period has been sub-divided into lower Paleolithic, middle Paleolithic and upper Paleolithic phases.

In archaeological excavations as one goes deeper into digging one goes back in time. As archaeological excavations are one of the most important sources for studying pre-historic cultures, hence the pre-historic period is classified as Lower and Upper Paleolithic periods. There was a lot of overlapping between the tools characterizing different periods.

Q. 3. Discuss in brief the evolution of Hominids to Homo sapiens sapiens stage.

Ans. The evolution of *hominids* to *Homo sapiens sapiens* stage has been a gradual process spread over 2.6 million years. The evolution process of hominids branched out in many species which inhabited vast regions of Africa and Asia. Over a period of around one million years some of the species became extinct, while some emerged as more developed hominid species which included the one known as *Homo erectus* dating back to around 1.5 million years. Their presence has been noticed till around 2,50,000 years and recorded in fairly wide spread regions. Evidence for their presence is available in Europe, Africa and Asia.