

## The Stone Age -a Wandering Life

The knife would cut the food better than the stone, because it has a sharp edge. It is a tool that helps you to cut food. The earliest people also made tools with sharp edges. Their tools are some sources that tell us about them.

### Tools

Most tools were made of stone. Toolmakers hit one stone with another stone until it had a sharp edge. Early tools that could be held comfortably in a human hand are called 'hand axes'. Slowly tools got better-they became thinner and sharper.

Some tools, like needles, were made from bones or the antlers of deer. Early people used their tools for hunting, fishing, cutting meat, cleaning animal skins, digging and sewing. Because so many stone tools have been found, this period is called Stone Age. It was a very long period of time. It had three phases, depending on the type of tools that were used.

### Shelters

Caves used as shelters have also been found. People probably lived in them when it was wet or cold. Some caves have the bones of animals. This tells us which animals were hunted and eaten by these people.

### Arts

In several parts of the world, drawing and paintings have been found on the walls of caves. These mainly show animals, though some show people as well. The colors are still quite bright, even though the paintings are very old. It is very dark inside caves, so people probably used fire to give them enough light to paint by. These drawings and paintings tell us about the animals the people had around them and also how they hunted them.

## THE HUNTER-GATHERERS

From these sources, experts can guess what the life of early people was like. At that time people did not know how to grow their food, so their main aim was to find food to be able to survive (stay alive). We call these people hunter-gatherers. They lived by hunting wild animals, fishing, and by searching for and gathering foods such as fruits, nuts, vegetables and honey.

At that time the earth was rich in plant and animal life. The hunter-gatherers depended on this environment for their food. They moved from place to place, wandering over large areas in search of food and water. They had to be near water, but also near areas where their food could be found. They had a very good understanding of their environment and were very skilled (skill=to be able to do something well) at what they needed to do.

The men hunted in groups. They observed and understood the animals they hunted- where they were to be found and how they lived. Some animals they hunted were the elephant, the buffalo, the giraffe, different type of deer and smaller animals like wild pigs. Animals were probably chased until they became tired and could be killed or until they fell into deep pit. Perhaps they were chased to a wet, muddy area where they got stuck. Stone tools were then used to kill them and cut the meat so that it could be carried home.

The women looked after the children. They also gathered food like fruits, roots, berries and seeds. They knew which plants and seeds could be eaten, when the fruits and berries ripened and where they grew. They used pointed stones and sticks as tools to dig up the roots.

All these were very important skills for the hunter-gatherers. The hunter-gatherers lived in groups of many people because they need each other-to hunt, to carry food home, to gather food and to look after children.

Though wandering about in search of food was not easy, the hunting-gathering way of life survived for thousands of years. This is because these people knew how to live well in their environment and because they were very skilled at what they did.

#### HUNTER-GATHERERS IN INDIA

Stone tools of early human beings have been found in several places in India too. India also has one of the largest collections of rock paintings in the world. Most of these are in the caves of the Satpura and Vindhya Hills in central India. The most famous rock paintings are at Bhimbetka in Madhya Pradesh.

In the Andaman and Nicobar islands, small groups of people still live like the earliest people, surviving through only hunting-gathering. However, modern influences have changed their lives. Their numbers have come down a lot in the last 200 years. It is difficult to say whether these hunter-gatherers will still be there by the end of this century.

Remember

The main source that tell us about the earliest people are their tools, bones, their shelters and cave paintings.

The earliest human beings were hunter-gatherers.

Hunter-gatherers lived in groups. They moved from place to place in search of food and water.

Hunter-gatherers were very skilled and had a good understanding of their environment.

Hunter-gatherers are still found in some parts of the world, including in India.

Did you know

Historians call that part of West Asia, where farming first started, the Fertile Crescent. The land was very fertile and crops grew easily. This area is mostly desert now.

Recent discoveries of Stone Age tools in West Bengal tell us that Stone Age people lived here thousands of years ago. Stone Age tools had earlier been discovered in parts of the Deccan plateau.