

Ancient Indian History UPSC CSE

(Prelims+Mains)
Supplementary Study Material

Module1:Stone Age

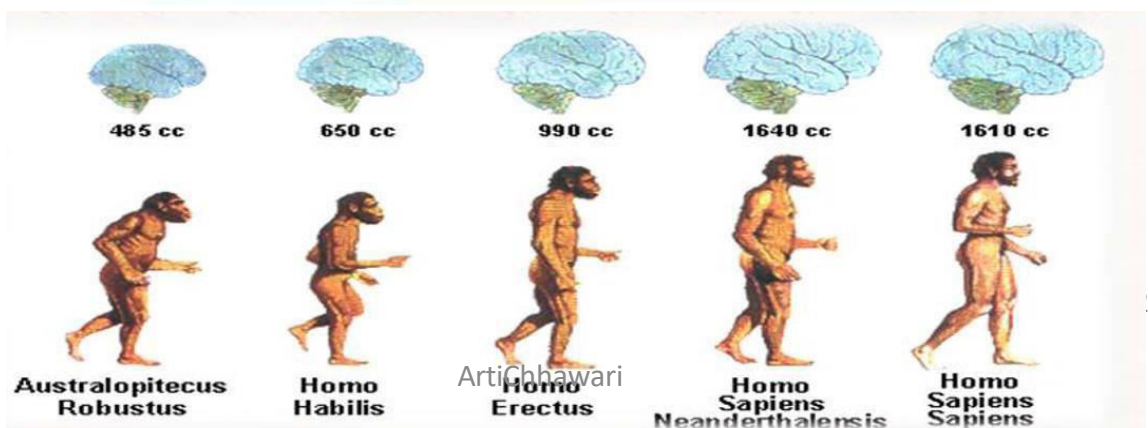
-Arti Chhawari

Human Evolution: The Old Stone Age

African Ancestors of Human Beings-

- Earth is over 4600 million years old. The evolution of its crust shows four stages. The fourth stage is called the quaternary. It is divided into two epochs called Pleistocene (iceage) and Holocene (post-iceage).
- First epoch lasted from 2 million BC to 12,000 BC, the second began in about 12,000 BC and continues to this day.
- Birth of the creature called *Australopithecus* was the most momentous step in the evolution of the human line. *Australopithecus* is a term that originated in Latin and means southern ape.
- First important *Homo* or human was *Homo habilis* found in eastern and southern Africa about 2–1.5 million years ago. *Homo habilis* means a handy or skilful man.
- Second important step saw the appearance of *Homo erectus* dated to 1.8 to 1.6 million years ago. *Homo erectus* means an erect or upright man. Its skull was strongly built, its brain case measuring 800–1200 cubic centimetres. New types of stone tools have been found with *Homo erectus*. The hand axe is considered the most distinctive. Their remains have been found in Africa, China, South Asia, and Southeast Asia.

EON	ERA	PERIOD	MILLIONS OF YEARS AGO	KEY EVENTS
Phanerozoic	Caenozoic	Quaternary	1.6	Humans evolve
		Tertiary		
	Mesozoic	Cretaceous	138	Extinction of Dinosaurs
		Jurassic		
		Triassic		
	Paleozoic	Permian	240	Permian mass extinction
		Carboniferous	330	
		Devonian	410	Invertebrates become common
		Silurian		
		Ordovician	500	
		Cambrian		
Proterozoic	Also known as Precambrian	3500	Earliest life	
Archean				
Hadean				



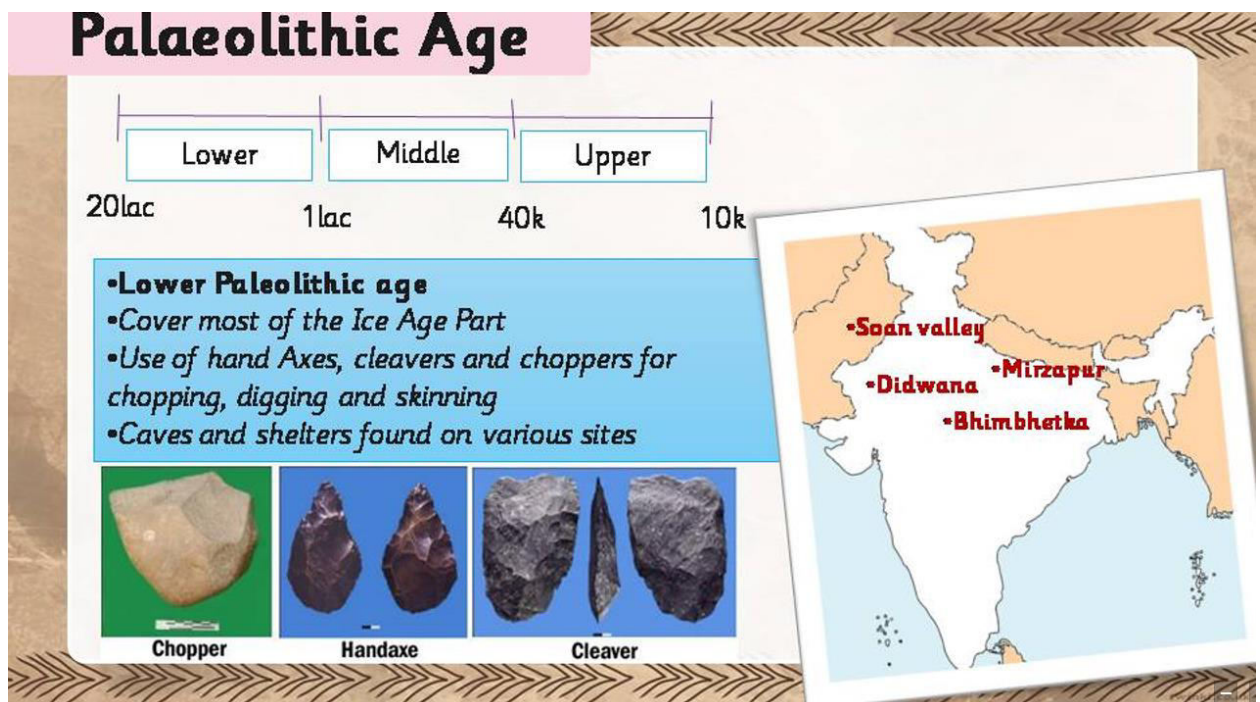
- Third step marked the emergence of *Homo sapiens*, which means wise man. Our own species evolved from *Homo sapiens*. It resembles the Neanderthal man found in western Germany around 230,000–30,000 years ago.
- It had a short body and very narrow forehead, but its brain case measured about 1200 to 1800 cubic centimetres. The race probably evolved in Europe, but the Neanderthal remains have also been found in the Near East and elsewhere in the Old World.
- Full-fledged modern man called *Homo sapiens sapiens* is traceable to about 115,000 years ago in southern Africa in the late Stone Age called the Upper Palaeolithic. The *Homo sapiens sapiens* had a large rounded brain case of about 1200–2000 cubic centimetres in volume.

The Early Man in India

- Some of the earliest skull fossils have been found in the Siwalik hills covering India and Pakistan. These skulls appear in the Potwar plateau, in Punjab province of Pakistan, which developed on sandstone.
- These skulls are called Ramapithecus and Sivapithecus. They seem to possess some hominid features though they represent apes. Ramapithecus was the female. It seems that further evolution from the Siwalik category of hominids came to a dead end in the subcontinent, and this species became extinct.
- An almost complete hominid skull was discovered in 1982 in the middle valley of the Narmada at Hathnora in MP. This fossilized skull was called *Homo erectus* or upright human, but is now anatomically recognized as archaic *Homo sapiens*.
- Remains of a full-fledged modern man called *Homo sapiens sapiens* have been reported from Sri Lanka. The find place is called FaHien, and the fossils found near by are 34,000 years old.

Phases in the Palaeolithic Age

3



- Palaeolithic Age in India is divided into three phases in accordance with the type of Stone tools used by the people and also according to the nature of climatic change.
- First phase is called Early or Lower Palaeolithic, the second Middle Palaeolithic, and the third Upper Palaeolithic.
- Bori artefacts- the first phase may be placed broadly between 600,000 and 150,000 BC, the second between 150,000 and 35,000 BC, and the third between 35,000 and 10,000 BC.
- Lower Palaeolithic or the Early Old Stone Age covers the greater part of the ice age. The Early Old Stone Age may have begun in Africa around two million years ago, but in India it is not older than 600,000 years.
- This date is given to Bori in Maharashtra, and this site is considered to be the Earliest Lower Palaeolithic site. People use hand axes, cleavers, and choppers.
- Axes found in India are more or less similar to those of western Asia, Europe, and Africa. Stone tools were used largely for chopping, digging, and skinning.
- Early Old Stone Age sites have been found in the valley of river Son or Sohan in Punjab, now in Pakistan. Several sites have been found in Kashmir and the Thar desert.
- Lower Palaeolithic tools have also been found in the Belan valley in UP and in the desert area of Didwana in Rajasthan. Didwana yielded not only Lower Palaeolithic stone tools but also those of the Middle and Upper Palaeolithic ages. Chirki-Nevasa in Maharashtra has yielded as many as 2000 tools, and those have also been found at several places in the south.
- Nagarjunakonda in Andhra Pradesh is an important site, and the caves and rock shelters of Bhimbetka near Bhopal also show features of the Lower Palaeolithic age.



Bhimbetka (in present day Madhya Pradesh)-This site is called *habitation-*

cum-factory sites. Each mark of the site from where archaeologists have found evidence of early farmers and herders. Some of the most important ones are in the north-west, in present-day Kashmir, and in east and south India.



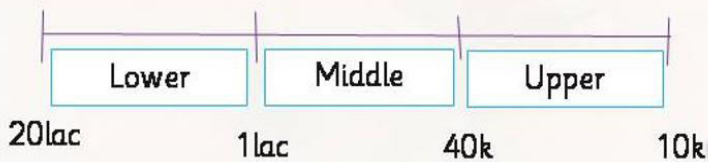
The earliest people were skilled *gatherers* who lived along the banks of river Narmada. The Sulaiman and Kirthar hills to the North west are the areas where women and men first began to *grow crops* such as wheat and barley about 8000 years ago are located here. The Garo hills to the north-east and the Vindhyas in central India. The places where rice was first grown are to the north of the Vindhyas.

- Hand axes have been found in a deposit of the time of the second Himalayan interglaciation, when the climate became less humid. The people of the Lower Stone Age seem to have principally been food gatherers.
- The Middle Palaeolithic Industries were largely based upon flakes or small pieces of stone Which have been found in different parts of India with regional variations.
- Principal tools comprise blades, points, borers, and scrapers, all made off flakes. The geographical horizon of the Middle Palaeolithic sites coincides roughly with that of the Lower Palaeolithic sites.

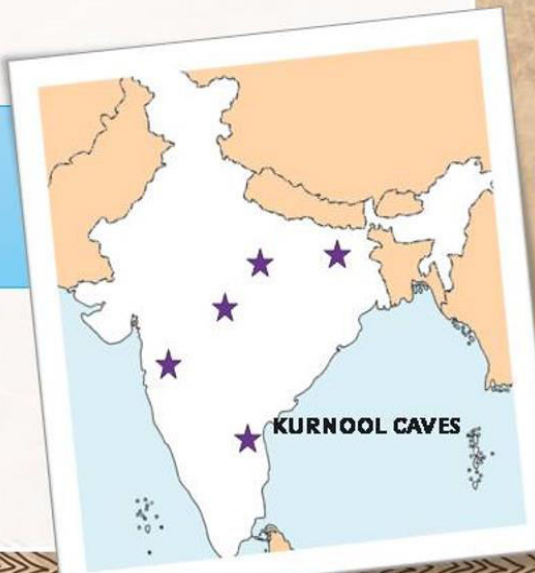
- Artefacts of this age are found at several places on the river Narmada, and also at several places south of the Tungabhadra river. The Belan valley (UP), which lies at the foothills of the Vindhyas, is rich in stone tools and animal fossils including cattle and deer.
- These remains relate to both the Lower and Middle Stone ages. In the Upper Palaeolithic phase we find 566 sites in India. The climate was less humid, coinciding with the last phase of the ice age when the climate became comparatively warm.
- In India, we notice the use of blades and burins, which have been found in AP, Karnataka, Maharashtra, central MP, southern UP, Jharkhand and adjoining areas.
- Caves and rock shelters for use by human beings in the Upper Palaeolithic phase have been discovered at Bhimbetka, 45 km south of Bhopal. An Upper Palaeolithic assemblage, characterized by comparatively large flakes, blades, burins, and scrapers has also been found in the upper levels of the Gujarat sand dunes.



Palaeolithic Age

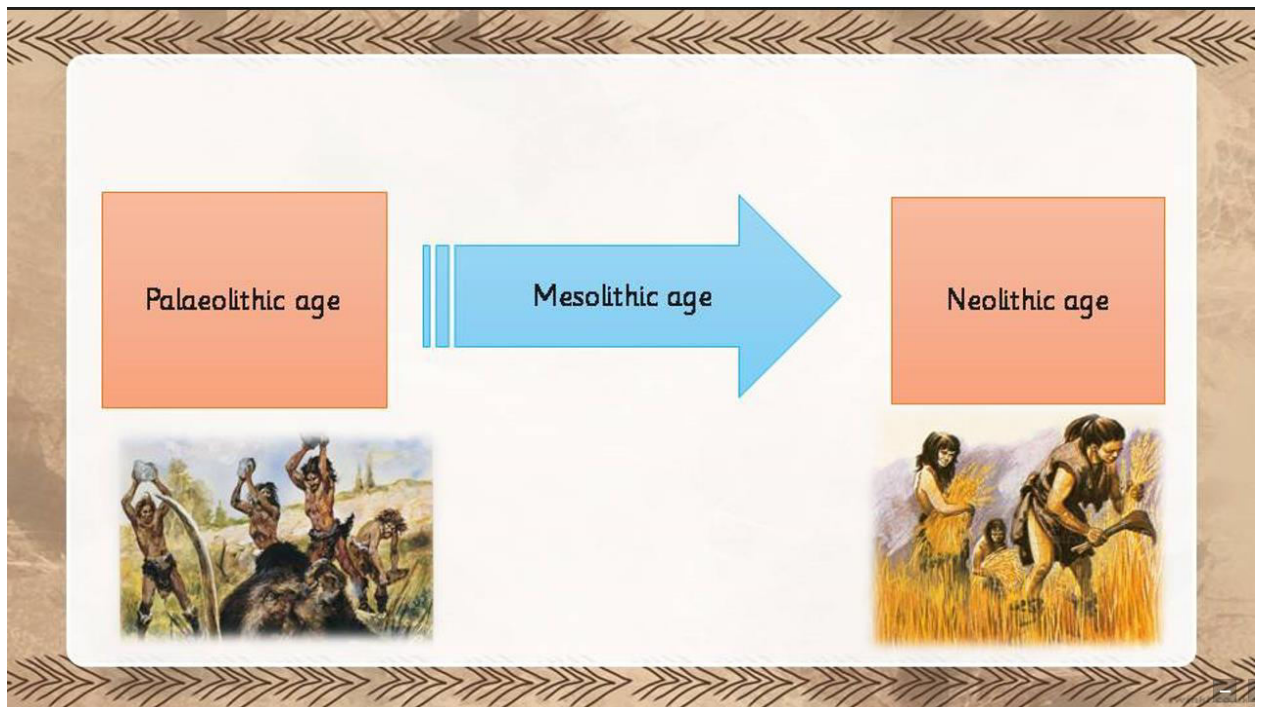


- **Upper Paleolithic age**
- Use of blades, burin tools and needles
- Emergence of *Homo sapiens*
- Tools made of stone and flint



The Mesolithic Age: Hunters and Herders

- In 9000 BC began an intermediate stage in Stone-Age culture, which is called the Mesolithic age. It intervened as a transitional phase between the Palaeolithic and the Neolithic or New Stone ages.
- Mesolithic people lived on hunting, fishing, and food gathering; at a later stage they also domesticated animals. The first three occupations continued the Palaeolithic practice, whereas the last developed in the Neolithic culture.
- Thus the Mesolithic age marked a transitional phase in the mode of subsistence leading to animal husbandry. The characteristic tools of the Mesolithic age are microliths or tiny tools.



- Mesolithic sites abound in Rajasthan, southern UP, central and eastern India, and Also south of the river Krishna.
- Bagor in Rajasthan is very well excavated. It had a distinctive microlithic industry, and its inhabitants subsisted on hunting and pastoralism. The site remained occupied for 5000 years from the fifth millennium BC onwards.
- Adamgarh in MP and Bagor in Rajasthan provide the earliest evidence for the domestication of animals in the Indian part of the sub continent; this could be around 5000 BC. The cultivation of plants around 7000–6000 BC is suggested in Rajasthan.

Art in the Old Stone Age

- People of the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic ages practiced painting. Prehistoric art appears at several places, but Bhimbetka in MP is a striking site. Situated in the Vindhyan range, 45 km south of Bhopal, it has over 500 painted rock shelters distributed in an area of 10 sq. km. At Bhimbetka, the rock paintings extend from the Upper Palaeolithic to the Mesolithic age.

Earliest Human Organization

- Bands were formed for hunting, there could have been a form of alliance between various bands for mutual aid, Rituals could have been conducted to ratify such an alliance. Eventually the band turned into an exogamous group called clan in the Neolithic phase.

The Neolithic Age: First Food Producers and Animal Keepers

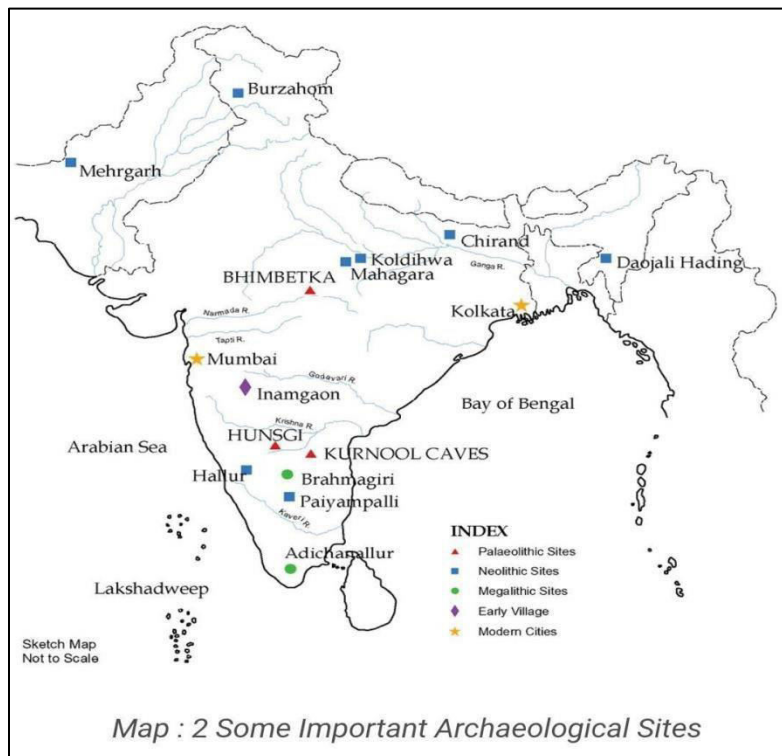
Earliest Rural Settlements in Baluchistan

- New Stone or the Neolithic age began in 9000BC. The only known Neolithic settlement in the Indian subcontinent, attributed to 7000BC, is in Mehrgarh, which is situated in Baluchistan, a province of Pakistan.
- Mehrgarh is located on the bank of the Bolan river in the Kochi plain which is called the 'bread basket' of Baluchistan. The settlement lay on the edge of the Indus plains.
- It is called one of the largest Neolithic settlements between the Indus and the Mediterranean. The Neolithic people of this area produced wheat and barley from the outset.
- They domesticated cattle, sheep, and goats in the initial stage. In the dried basin of Hakra, a tributary of the Indus, forty-seven Later Neolithic settlements have been found.
- People of the Neolithic age used tools and implements of polished stone. They particularly used stone axes, which have been found in large numbers in a substantial part of the hilly tracts of India.
- Based on the types of axes used by Neolithic settlers, three important areas of Neolithic settlements—north-western, north-eastern, and southern.
- north-western group of Neolithic tools is distinguished by rectangular axes with a curved cutting edge; the north-eastern group by polished stone axes with a rectangular butt and occasional shouldered hoes; and the southern group by axes with oval sides and pointed butt.

Use of Bone Tools in the Sites of Burzahom and Chirand

- In the north-west, Kashmiri Neolithic culture was distinguished by its dwelling pits, wide range of ceramics, the variety of stone and bone tools, and the complete absence of microliths.
 - Its most important site is Burzahom, which means 'the place of birch', situated 16km north-west of Srinagar. The Neolithic people lived there on a lake-side in pits, and probably had a hunting and fishing economy, and seem to have been acquainted with agriculture.
 - people of Gufkral (literally the 'cave of the potter'), a Neolithic site, 41km south-west of Srinagar, practiced both agriculture and animal husbandry. The Neolithic people in Kashmir used polished tools of stone, numerous tools and weapons made of bone.
 - only other place which has yielded considerable bone implements in India is Chirand, 40km west of Patna on the northern side of the Ganges. Made of antlers (horn of deer), these implements have been found in a late Neolithic settlement in an area with about 100cm rainfall.
 - people of Burzahom used coarse grey pottery. At Burzahom, domestic dogs were buried with their masters in their graves. This practice does not seem to be evident in any other Neolithic culture in India. The earliest date for Burzahom is about 2700BC, but the bones recovered from Chirand cannot be dated earlier than 2000BC and possibly belong to the late Neolithic phase.
 - Neolithic tools have also been found in the Garo hills in Meghalaya on the north-eastern frontier of India. These group may include the settlements in the Vindhyas and the Kaimur hill.

- A number of Neolithic settlements on the northern spurs of the Vindhyas in Mirzapur and Allahabad districts of UP. Neolithic sites such as Koldihwa and Mahagara in Allahabad district are known for the cultivation of rice in the fifth millennium BC.



- Senuwar in Rohtas district in the Kaimur hilly area is the most important site. Also notable is the site of Taradih close to the Bodh-Gaya temple.



In Burzahom (in present-day Kashmir) people built pit-houses, which were dug into the ground, with steps leading into them. These may have provided shelter in cold weather. Archaeologists have also found cooking hearths both inside and outside the huts, which suggests that, depending on the weather; people could cook food either indoors or outdoors.



Neolithic Settlement's tools—These include tools that were polished to give a fine cutting edge, and mortars and pestles used for grinding grain and other plant produce. Mortars and pestles are used for grinding grains.



Mehrgarh—This site is located in a fertile plain, near the Bolan Pass, which is one of the most important routes into Iran. Mehrgarh was probably one of the places where women and men learnt to grow barley and wheat, and rear sheep and goats for the first time in this area. It is one of the earliest villages. Other finds at Mehrgarh include remains of square or rectangular houses. Each house had four or more compartments, some of which may have been used for storage. Several burial sites have been found at Mehrgarh. In one instance, the dead person was buried with goats, which were probably meant to serve as food in the next world.

Daojali Hading-This is a site on the hills near the Brahmaputra Valley,close to routes leading into China and Myanmar. Here stone tools, including mortars and pestles, have been found. These indicate that people were probably growing grain and preparing food from it.Other finds include jadeite,a stone that may have been brought from China.

Neolithic Settlements inSouth India

- An important group of Neolithic people lived in south India, south of the Godavari river. They usually settled on the tops of granite hills or on plateaus near the river banks.
- They used stone axes and also a kind of stone blades. Fire baked earthen figurines suggest that they kept a large number of cattle, besides sheep and goats. They used stone querns for grinding corn, which shows that they were acquainted with the art of producing cereals.
- South India has the largest number of Neolithic settlements, because of the easy availability of stone, with over 850 settlements spread across AP, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu. Some of the important Neolithic sites or those with Neolithic layers that have been excavated include Maski, Brahmagiri, Hallur, Kodekal, Sanganakallu, Piklihal, and Takkalakota in Karnataka, and Paiyampalli in Tamil Nadu.
- Utnur is an important Neolithic site in AP. The Neolithic settlers in Piklihal were cattle-herders. Both ashmounds and habitation sites have been found in Piklihal.

FarmingandCereals

Grains	Sites
Wheat,barley,sheep,goat,Cattle	Mehrgarh(inpresentday-Pakistan)
Rice,fragmentary,Animalbones	Koldihwa(inpresent-dayUttarPradesh)
Rice,cattle(hoofmarksonclaysurface)	Mahagara(inpresent-dayUttarPradesh)
Wheatandlentil	Gufkral(inpresent-dayKashmir)
Wheatandlentil,dog,cattle,sheep,goat,buffalo	Burzahom(inpresent-dayKashmir)
Wheat,greengram,barley,buffalo,ox	Chirand(inpresent-dayBihar)
Millet,cattle,sheep,goat,pig	Hallur(inpresent-dayAndhraPradesh)
Blackgram,millet,cattle,sheep,pig	Paiyampalli(inpresent-day Andhra Pradesh)