

THE STONE AGE-A SETTLED LIFE.

You buy from a shopkeeper, who buys from a wholesaler (who buys very large amounts to sell to shopkeepers) but it is farmers who grow almost all the food that we eat. Experts think that farming started many thousands of years after human beings first appeared on earth.

THE NEW STONE AGE.

I) THE BEGINNING OF FARMING.

As the hunter-gatherers wandered about in search of food, they probably noticed that many plants, such as wild wheat had seeds that could be eaten. They also saw that if these seeds fell on the ground, sometime later new plants of the same kind began to grow there. They realized that they could gather such seeds and plant them near where they lived. Seeds from one or two plants would give them many plants and food for many people. This was a big discovery. It was the start of farming.

Hunter-gatherers had to search for food and eat whatever was available-they were dependent on the environment. Now human beings could plant the food they wanted to eat-they were making changes in the environment. Slowly people changed from hunting-gathering to farming. This did not happen at the same time all over the world. Farming first started in West Asia. Later it started in South-East Asia in the region of the Mekong Delta.

II) SOURCES.

Archaeologists have discovered remains of villages. The huts of the first farmers were round or circular. They have also found grinding stones for grinding seeds into flour, pots for cooking or storage, seeds and tools used for farming. From all these sources, archaeologists have been able to guess what the lives of the early farmers were like.

III) FARMING CHANGED PEOPLE'S LIVES.

Farming was a very important development in human history. It changed the way that human beings had lived for thousands of years. These are the ways in which the lives of people changed:

- 1) Life became more settled-Hunter-gatherers had to wander over a large area to hunt animals or gather food for a group of people. With farming, crops that provided food for the same number of people could be grown in a much smaller area. People lived near their crops to be able to care for them.
- 2) Small villages grew-as people's lives became more settled. The first huts were made of blocks of clay which had been dried in the sun. Many of these villages grew into towns and cities later.
- 3) Animals were domesticated-Dogs were the first animals to be domesticated. They were domesticated while human beings were still hunter-gatherers. Dogs were useful as guard animals and hunting companions. Later sheep, goats, cows and pigs were domesticated and provided milk, meat, wool and skin.
- 4) The food of the people changed-Hunter-gatherers ate mostly meat and fish as well as fruits, roots and seeds. After they started farming, people ate mainly cereals, some vegetables, meat and milk.
- 5) Many other things became possible-Because of farming, enough food for the entire village could be grown by just a few people. Other people in the group had time to think about and do other things. For example, some people learnt to make clay pottery. The pots could be used for cooking or storing food.
- 6) Trade developed-Villages and towns produced more food and other goods than they needed. They began to exchange the extra goods with each other. This was the start of trade (trade=buying and selling of goods).

- 7) The population began to grow-Over hundreds of years, early farmers grew better and more crops, so gradually food became more easily available. The number of people increased. Farming, which first developed about 12,000 years ago, is still the best way for human beings to get their food. It is a major occupation all over the world.

IV) HERDING.

All animals and plants that we use were at one time found only in the wild. Gradually humans domesticated those animals and grew those plants that would be useful. Some places were not suitable for growing crops. Here people kept herds of domesticated animals like sheep, goats or cattle that ate wild grasses and plants. When the food for their animals was finished in one place, people moved to another where it was available. These people were wandering herders. In many places people lead similar lives even today.

V) METALS ARE DISCOVERED.

The Stone Age was followed by the Metal Age, when people discovered how to use metals. The earliest part of this period is the Chalcolithic or Copper Age when copper was discovered and used. In the beginning, when not much copper was available, it was only used to make small or precious things. Later, though people continued to use stone tools, copper was also used to make tools. However, copper is a soft metal, and the tools needed to be sharpened often. Later another metal, tin, was discovered in some parts of the world. This was mixed with copper to make bronze, which was stronger than copper. This period, in which bronze became the most commonly used metal, is called the Bronze Age. Many artefacts from the Bronze Age have been discovered, such as tools, cooking vessels, weapons, jewellery and decorative items. Copper and bronze are used even today to make jewellery, statues, utensils and medals.

VI) FARMING IN INDIA.

Farming started very early in India too. Even today, most Indians live in villages where the main occupation is farming. In some places the methods of farming have not changed for centuries, but in others farming with tractors and modern tools is also practised.

SUMMARY.

- 1) Farming was a major development in human history.
- 2) Farming changed human lives.
- 3) Some people were wandering herders.
- 4) Metals were discovered during this time.
- 5) Farming started early in India. Millions of Indians are still farmers.
- 6) 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.
- 7) Archaeologists have found many ancient images of mother-goddesses in several parts of the world. They think that early farmers worshipped the earth as a mother who helped them produce their food.
- 8) Gold is considered the most precious metal because unlike other metals its colour never changes. The oldest gold artefacts found still have a lovely golden glow.