

CHAPTER-2

BHARATHAVARSHA



After studying this chapter you learn :

- About the physical features of India.
- India is both subcontinent and peninsula.
- To identify the neighbouring countries of India.
- About the living style of man in pre-historic period.
- About the stone ages of pre-historic period in India.

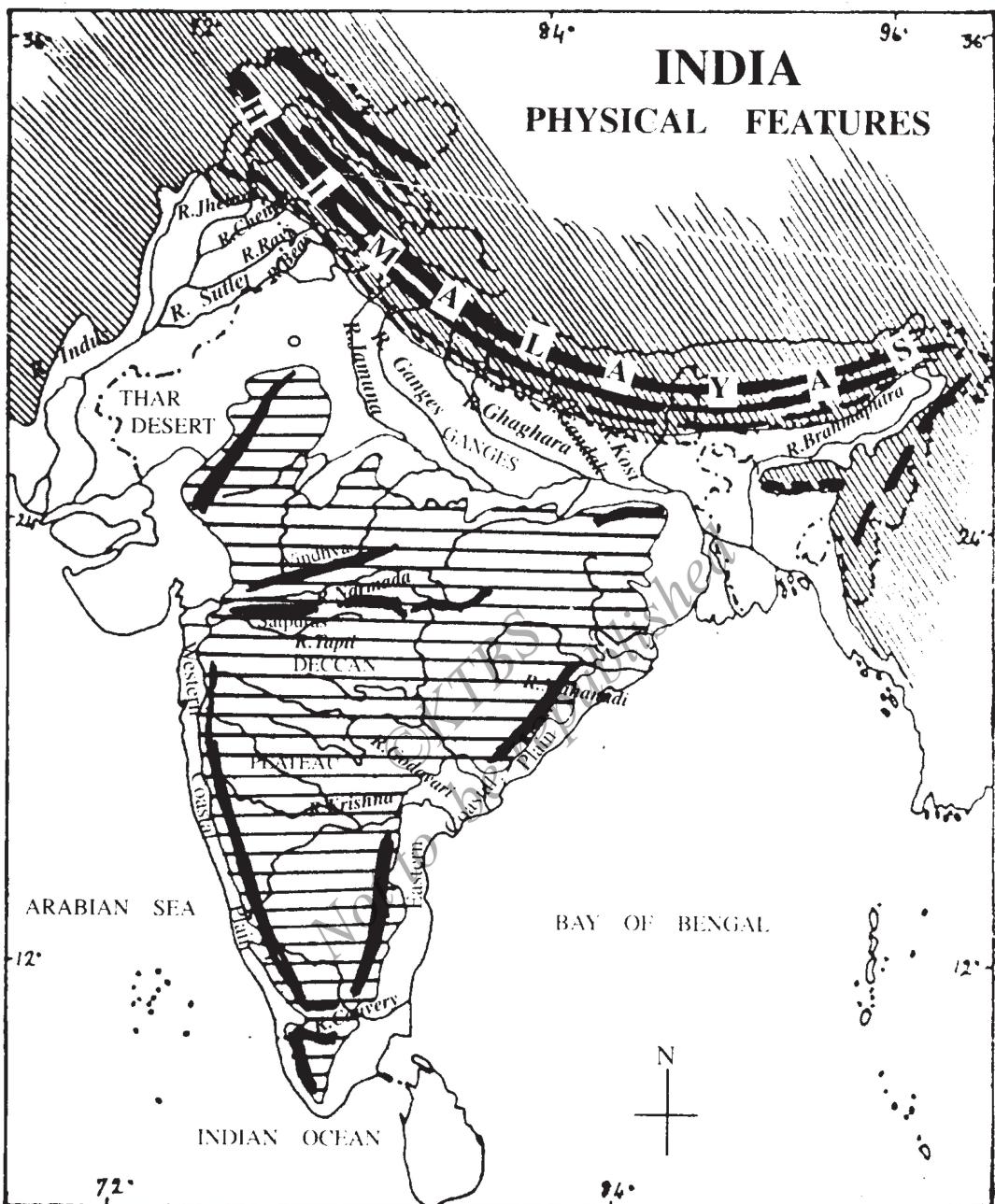
The geographical environment has influenced every country and race in the world. There is an intimate relationship between human life and the environment. Hence it is necessary to learn about the geographical environment in order to know about human history. India is a sub-continent occupying a huge area in the southern part of the Asian Continent. It is a peninsula, surrounded by water on three sides and land on one side. India shares its boundaries with Pakistan, Afghanistan, China, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Myanmar. Earlier all these areas were together called as Bharathavarsha, Bharatha Khanda, Sindhudweepa, Akhandabharatha and Greater India too. It consists of 28 states and 9 union territories and one national capital region (Delhi).

India's geographical features comprise the Himalayan range of mountains in the North, the Indo-Gangetic plain, the Deccan Plateau in the South and the Coastal region. The snow-capped mountains in the North include some of the tallest mountain peaks in the world. They help to preserve the safety and security of India. There have been a few intrusions into ancient India from the northern Himalayan region. The attacks have been mainly from the north-western side through the valleys of Bolan and Khyber passes. The flat Indo-Gangetic plains are an extremely fertile area. The ancient civilizations of Indus Valley and Vedic period flourished here. Many

battles have been fought from time to time to establish control over this area. Usually, the dynasties that established control over this fertile gangetic plain also established empires in this area.



The Narmada river separates India into two - Malwa plateau or Central Highlands and the Deccan Plateau, in the south. The Mauryas and the Guptas ruled these two areas of ancient India. The Indian coastline is vast and stretches over 6,100 kms. The eastern coastline is called the Coromandel Coast & Utkal Coast, whereas the western coastline is



referred to as Konkan and Malabar coast. The numerous ports on this coastline had attracted the Romans from time immemorial. Foreign trade was carried on in those days only through sea-routes. Thus these ports developed and became the cause for the rise of powerful kingdoms in the South like the Pandyas, the Cheras and the Cholas.

The diversity in the Indian geographical environment has also influenced the lives of communities living here. Despite the cultural diversity, there exists a cultural unity which binds all these diversities. Unity in diversity is the essence of this culture.

The Prehistoric Age

The period before the discovery of the art of writing is called the Prehistoric age. This is so because we do not find evidence to the linguistic development or to the use of script. We do not get any written records for the study of history of this period. Then how do we get to know about the people and their life in the prehistoric age? The scholars who study this period are called archaeologists. In this age, man was a nomad and indulged in hunting and food-gathering. Archaeologists have discovered some implements created and used by these people. Probably they used weapons made of stone, wood and bones. Among these, only weapons made of stone have survived today, providing us sources for study. Human beings in the prehistoric age used stone implements to peel the skin and separate the flesh and bones of animals, to scrape the bark of trees, and to cut fruits and roots. The people used to create handles out of bones and wood, and using them like spears and arrows, hunted animals. They used stones as axes to chop down trees and cut them up into logs. They might have used wood to build huts for themselves, or to make handles for their weapons.

Where did the Pre-historic man live?

The relics of the hunting and food-gathering man are available in Bimbetka, Hunasagi and Kurnool in India. There are many other sites in which such relics have been found. Most of these sites have been discovered along the banks of rivers and lakes. Furthermore, since stone implements were essential for the survival of people of that age, they chose areas abundant with stone which could fulfil their needs. Areas where people used stones to create various implements have been considered as industrial sites.

How do we get to know about such industrial sites? Usually we get to see stone implements around rocky areas. People might have rejected some rocks as unsuitable for their implements. Heaps of

broken rock or stone-chips obtained during the creation of implements abound in such areas. It is possible that people lived for a long time in these places. These sites are called residential and industrial sites.

Awareness about fire

Signs of ashes have been found in the caves of Kurnool. They reveal the awareness and the use of fire by the people of the Stone Age. Probably fire was used for various purposes to cook food, for lighting and safety from animals.

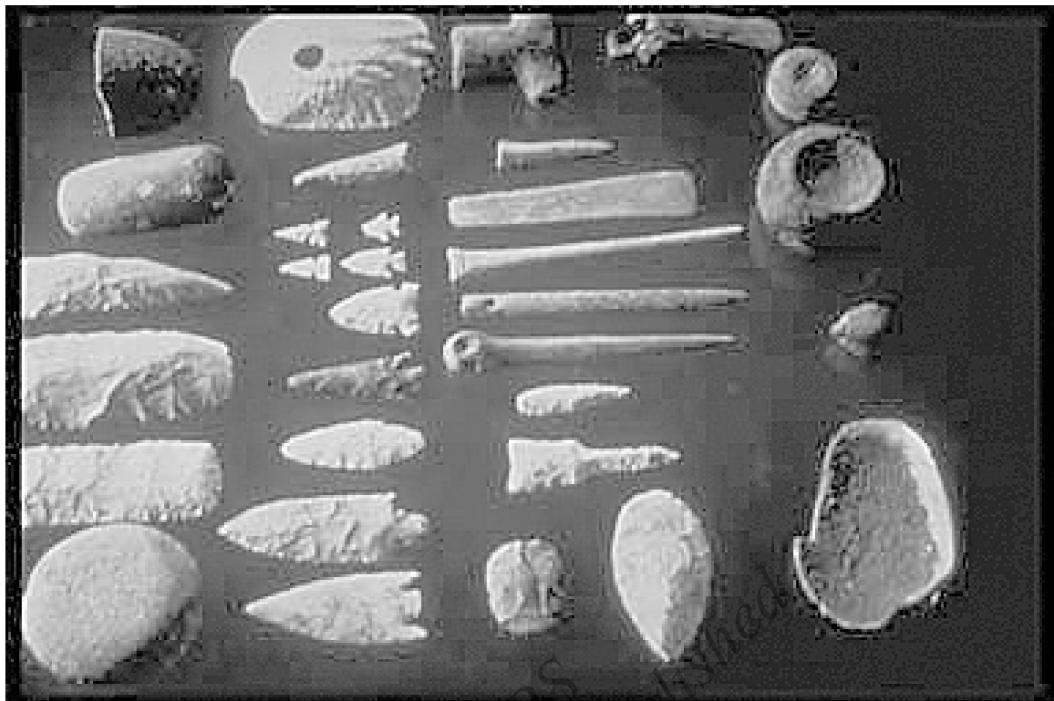
Drawings found in caves

We get to see some drawings in many caves in which people lived in the Stone Age. Even today we can see the drawings done on the walls of caves and on rocks. Such cave-drawings can be seen in Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka. There are beautiful drawings of wild animals and of hunting.

The changing environment

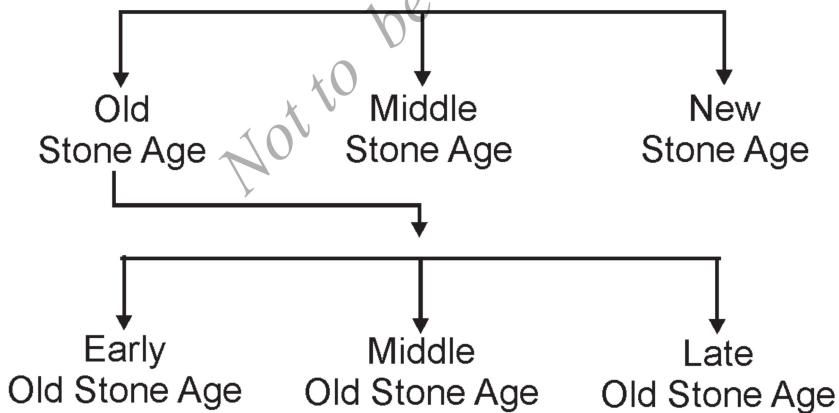
It is believed that 12,000 years ago a major change took place in the world's environment. The earth's temperature began to increase gradually. This led to the development of grasslands in many places. Birds and animals began to multiply in unprecedented numbers. Animals like deer, elks, goats, sheep and others flourished in these grasslands. Man who had been hunting animals, began to observe their nature, food habits and the way these animals breed. Over a period of time, he captured these animals and domesticated them. This was the way the practices of animal husbandry and dairy farming began. Man had by now, learnt to catch fish in streams and lakes. Human beings noticed in the meantime that some grain bearing grass had grown naturally. the grains and cereals like rice, wheat and barley were obtained from such plants. Man learnt to use them as food, gradually he learnt to grow them too.

Archaeologists refer to the age we discussed now, by different names. The age which prevailed 2 million years ago is the oldest period and is called the Old Stone Age, and it stretched over a period of 12,000 years. This long duration has been classified into three stages - the Early, Middle and Late Old Stone Ages.



Implements

Diagram showing the stages of the Prehistoric age



The period from 12,000 years to around 10,000 years is called the Middle Stone Age. The implements of this period are generally very small and hence they are called delicate stone implements. Man used to fashion handles from delicate stone for weapons made from bone and wood. He used those implements as axes and saws. Along with these tools, weapons of the old kind too continued to exist.

The New Stone Age began after 10,000 years. The stone weapons of this period are different from those of the earlier periods. These weapons were bright and had sharp blades. People of this age used grinding stones for grinding leaves and herbs and for powdering grains and cereals. Some pots and pans of this period have been found, a few of which have been decorated. Pots were used for storing grains. They were also used for cooking rice, wheat and other grains and cereals. People of this age had learnt to weave cloth.

EXERCISES

I Complete the following sentences by using suitable words in the blanks :

1. Geographically, India is a _____.
2. Signs of ashes have been found in caves of _____.
3. The implements of the Middle Stone Age are called _____.

II Answer to the following questions in brief :

4. Describe briefly the physical features of India.
5. What are the valleys through which the attacks on India have taken place?
6. What is meant by 'Prehistoric Age'?
7. How did animal husbandry and dairy farming evolve?
8. The different periods of prehistory have been given various names by archaeologists. What are they?

III Activity :

9. Visit a cave along with your parents and learn more about it from your teacher.

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