

SEMESTER : 1

HISMAJ 1014 : INTRODUCTION TO THE ANCIENT INDIAN CIVILISATION

UNIT-I :: Neolithic Period

Neolithic Period (New Stone Age):

The term Neolithic is derived from the Greek word 'neo' which means new and 'lithic' meaning stone. Thus, the term Neolithic Age refers to the 'New Stone Age'. It is also termed as 'Neolithic revolution' since it introduced a lot of important changes in man's social and economic life. The Neolithic age saw man turning into a food producer from food gatherer.

Characteristic Features of the Neolithic Age:

- **Tools and Weapons** – The people used microlithic blades in addition to tools made of polished stones. The use of celts was especially important for ground and polished hand axes. They also used tools and weapons made of bones – such as needles, scrapers, borers, arrowheads, etc. The use of new polished tools made it easier for humans to cultivate, hunt and perform other activities in a better manner.
- **Agriculture** – The people of the Neolithic age cultivated land and grew fruits and corn like ragi and horse gram (kulati). They also domesticated cattle, sheep and goats.
- **Pottery** – With the advent of agriculture, people were required to store their food grains as well as to cook, eat the product, etc. That's why it is said that pottery appeared in this phase on a large scale. The pottery of this period was classified under greyware, black-burnished ware, and mat impressed ware. In the initial stages of the Neolithic age, handmade pottery was made but later on, foot wheels were used to make pots.
- **Housing and Settled Life** – The people of Neolithic age lived in rectangular or circular houses which were made of mud and reeds. Neolithic men also knew how to make boats and could spin cotton, wool and weave cloth. The people of the Neolithic age led a more settled life and paved the way for the beginning of civilization.

The neolithic people did not live far away from the hilly areas. They inhabited mainly the hilly river valleys, rock shelters and the slopes of the hills, since they were entirely dependent on weapons and tools made of stone.

Important Neolithic Sites

- **Koldihwa and Mahagara (south of Allahabad)** – This site provides evidence of circular huts along with crude hand made pottery. There is also evidence of rice, which is the oldest evidence of rice, not only in India but anywhere in the world.
- **Mehrgarh (Balochistan, Pakistan)** – The earliest Neolithic site, where people lived in houses built of sun-dried bricks and cultivated crops like cotton and wheat.
- **Burzahom (Kashmir)** – The domestic dogs were buried along with their masters in their graves; people lived in pits and used tools made of polished stones as well as bones.
- **Gufkral (Kashmir)** – This neolithic site is famous for pit dwelling, stone tools and graveyards in houses.
- **Chirand (Bihar)** – The neolithic men used tools and weapons made of bones.
- **Piklihal, Brahmagiri, Maski, Takkalakota, Hallur (Karnataka)** – The people were cattle herders. They domesticated sheep and goats. Ash mounds have been found.

- **Belan Valley** (which is located on the northern spurs of the Vindhyas and middle part of Narmada valley) – All the three phases i.e., palaeolithic, mesolithic and neolithic ages are found in sequence.