

CHAPTER-2: ON THE TRAIL OF THE EARLIEST PEOPLE

MODULE -1/2

The earliest people: why were they on the move?

We know about the people who lived in the subcontinent about two million years ago. Today we describe them as **hunter-gatherers**.

The name comes from the way in which the earliest people got their food. They hunted wild animals, caught birds and fishes, gathered fruits, roots, nuts, seeds, leaves, stalks and eggs.

Hunting and gathering plant produce was not easy to do.

There are many animals which run faster than humans. To hunt animals or catch fish and birds, they need to be alert and quick.

They also need to find out which plants can be eaten and which cannot be eaten.

They also need to find out about the seasons when the fruits ripen.

Why hunter-gatherers moved from place to place?

There are at least four reasons why the hunter-gatherers moved from place to place.

Firstly, they would have to move in search of food because they may end up by consuming all the resources of one place.

Secondly, animals move from one place to another place, therefore, people have to move in search of animals.

Thirdly, plants and trees give fruits in different seasons and due to change in seasons, the hunter-gatherers also changed their places.

Fourthly, people, plants and animals need water to live. So, they moved from place to place in search of water resources. Besides, they may have travelled to other places to meet their friends and relatives.

How do we know about these people?

We came to know about these people with the help of archaeologists.

They found some of the things hunter-gatherers made and used.

People made and used tools of stone, wood and bone.

The stone tools were survived best till now.

Uses of stone tools

Some stone tools were used to

- i. Cut meat and bone
- ii. Scrape bark (from trees) and hides (animal skins)
- iii. Chop fruits and roots
- iv. Attached to handles of bone or wood to make spears and arrows for hunting.

Other tools were used to chop wood.

Stone tools may also have been used for digging the ground to collect edible roots, stitching clothes made out of animal skin.

Choosing a place to live in

Archaeologists have found the evidence of hunter-gatherers in some places like Bhimbetka, Hunsgi and Kurnool caves in India.

They lived in many places.

Many sites were located near source of water such as rivers and lakes.

As stone tools were important for a hunter-gatherer, archaeologists tried to find evidence at the places where the good quality stone was found.

Places where stone was found and where people made tools are known as factory sites.

Habitation sites are places where people lived.

Sometimes people lived at factory sites for a longer period of time and hence they are called 'habitation cum factory sites'

Hunter-gatherers chose to live in caves and rock shelters because they provided shelter from rain, heat and wind.

Making stone tools

There were two techniques of making stone tools by the earliest people.

1. Stone on Stone technique

The first technique which was used to make stone tools is 'stone on stone'. In this technique, one stone was used as the hammer in one hand and another stone was used as core, in other words, stone from which the tool has to be made. The hammer stone strikes off flakes from the core until they get the desired shape.

2. Pressure flaking Technique

Another technique is Pressure flaking. In this technique, the core was placed on a firm surface and the hammer stone was used on a piece of stone or bone that was placed on the core, to remove flakes that could be shaped into tools.
