

HISTORY

UNIT - I

1. PRE - HISTORIC AGE IN TAMIL NADU

Learning Objectives:

1. To know the classification of pre-historic period.
2. To know the life of the people in the Old Stone Age in Tamil Nadu.
3. To understand the Old Stone Age technologies such as the use of wheel and making of fire.
4. To know the beginning of agriculture in Tamil Nadu.
5. To know that the human life had improved during the Metal Age.
6. To know about the Megalithic Culture prevalent Tamil Nadu.

The origin of human race on the planet earth took place several thousands of years ago. The early history of human beings is called the pre-historic age. Written records are not available for the pre-historic period. However, the pre-historic people had left many things such as pieces of pottery, stone and metal tools, simple drawings, bones and skeletons. These materials provide some clue

to know the history of the pre-historic period. Material remains belonging to the pre-historic period have also been unearthed in many places of Tamil Nadu.

The pre-historic period in Tamil Nadu may be classified into

1. Old Stone Age
2. New Stone Age
3. Metal Age
4. Megalithic Age

Old Stone Age :

The first stage of human life is called the Old Stone Age. The people of this period used crude and rough stone implements for hunting the animals. These implements were made of **quartzite** or hard rock. Therefore, this period is named as the Old Stone Age. The implements of this period are found in several parts of Tamil Nadu. **Robert Bruce Foote** had first discovered the Old Stone Age implements at **Pallavaram** near Chennai. Later, similar discoveries were made in the districts of Kanchipuram, Vellore and Thiruvallur.



Fig. 1. Old Stone Age Implements

Simple hand axes and pieces of stone tools were found in the valley of river **Koratalayar** near Chennai and in **Vada Madurai**. Thus it is clearly evident that the Old Stone Age people lived in different parts of Tamil Nadu. It is generally believed that the Old Stone Age lasted up to B.C. 10,000.

Life Style:

The Old Stone Age people led a nomadic life wandering in search of food. Therefore, they are called as food gatherers. Fruits, vegetables, roots and animal flesh constitute their chief food. They had no idea of cultivation. They did not know the art of making pottery. They took shelter in caves in order to protect themselves from wild animals as well as from harsh climates.

Dress:

In the beginning, the Old Stone Age people did not wear any dress. Subsequently, they began to use animal skins, leaves and barks to cover their bodies. In this way they protected themselves from bitter cold and burning heat.

Fire:

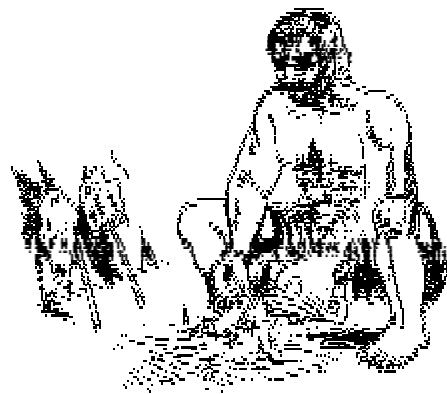


Fig. 2. Making fire by using flint stones

The Old Stone Age people produced fire by rubbing two flint stones. They used fire to scare away animals and also to roast the flesh of animals to eat. They also used fire to warm themselves during the cold weather.

Paintings:

We find paintings in the caves in which the Old Stone Age people lived. The most popular among them are the paintings, which portray the hunting of animals like elephant, bear, and deer.

Beliefs:

The Old Stone Age people had no idea of God or religion. They did not know how to dispose off the dead and therefore, they left the dead bodies as a prey to animals and birds.

New Stone Age:

The New Stone Age followed the Old Stone Age. It is to be noted that the transition from Old Stone Age to New Stone Age was only gradual. The New Stone Age people had improved their life in all respects. The life in the New Stone Age was not only

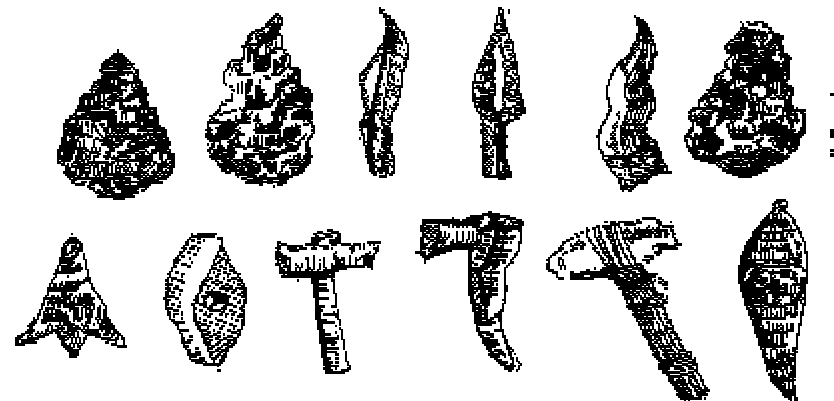


Fig. 3. New Stone Age Implements

more progressive than that of the Old Stone Age but also varied. The New Stone Age people used trap rock instead of hard rock to make their stone implements. Their stone weapons and tools were also more polished and sharpened. They began to lead a settled life instead of wandering from place to place. These people abandoned caves and began to build clay huts and thatched houses for living. The New Stone Age people lived and worked in groups. It is important to know that this kind of group-life had subsequently led to the formation of villages.

The most important features of the New Stone Age include the beginning of agriculture, domestication of animals and pottery making. In short, the New Stone Age witnessed an all round development in the human life. This development indicates the gradual evolution of human life in different stages. It had also resulted in enormous changes in human life. It took a long period for these changes to happen.

Agriculture:

In the New Stone Age, people had learnt the art of cultivation. Therefore, they began to live in the river valleys since agriculture had become their primary occupation. They produced rice, millet, vegetable and fruits. It is to be noted that the food gatherers of the Old Stone Age had become the food producers in the New Stone Age.

Domestication of Animals:

During the New Stone Age, people started domesticating animals such as dog, sheep, cow and buffalo. Dog was helpful to them while going for hunting. Other animals such as cattle were used for transportation and also as food.

Wheel and Pottery:



Fig. 4. Using the wheel for making pottery

The discovery of wheel was a remarkable event in the life of man. The New Stone Age people used wheels to carry goods from one place to another. They also used the wheel for making pottery. In Tamil Nadu, the New Stone Age potteries have been discovered in the districts of Tirunelveli, Salem, Pudukottai and Tiruchirappalli. Burial urn, water pots, lamps and other vessels of this period have also been found in these places.

Try to make wheel and other toys using clay

Dress and Ornaments:

The New Stone Age people knew the art of weaving. In Tamil Nadu, cotton was grown in plenty and it was used for weaving clothes. Cotton clothes were widely used by the New Stone Age people. Later, they developed the art of dyeing the clothes and wore coloured clothes. The New Stone Age people used ornaments like necklace, beads and bangles. These ornaments were made of shells and bones.

Belief:

The custom of burial developed during the New Stone Age. Burial urns have been unearthed in several parts of Tamil Nadu. The dead bodies were kept in huge pots along with food and other items. Then, these pots were buried in pits. The New Stone Age people worshipped the dead. Subsequently, religious rituals had also developed.

Compare and contrast between the Old Stone Age and the New Stone Age

Metal Age:

Copper was the first known metal to man. In North India, the Copper Age followed the Stone Age. In the South, iron was discovered and used by man. Iron implements have been found along with stone implements in Perumbudur near Chennai. So, it may be said that the Iron Age followed the Stone Age in Tamil Nadu.

During the Metal Age, agriculture had improved much. Iron implements were efficiently used for cultivation. Paddy was extensively cultivated. Later, irrigation system had also improved. There was a general progress and development in the life of the people during the Metal Age.

Megalithic Age:

The word **megalith** refers to the burial monument. The people who lived during the last stages of the New Stone Age began to follow the megalithic system of burial. According to this system, the dead body was put in a black and red pot along with iron implements and the pot was buried. A circular tomb using big stone slabs was built upon the place of burial. This is called

megalith. Such megaliths have been found in the districts of Kanchipuram, Vellore, Tiruvannamalai, Cuddalore, Tiruchirappalli and Pudukottai.

Another system of burial was known as urn burials. Urns without circular megalithic tombs have been discovered at Adhichanallur in Tirunelveli district. Bronze articles and iron implements are found in these urns. The discovery of trident or **Vel** in some of these urns suggests that these people worshipped Lord Muruga, the famous God of the Tamil people.

Several utensils made of bronze have been found in Adhichanallur. The hook or **alagu**, which is still used in religious ceremonies, has been found here. Hence, it may be said that the use of hooks in religious ceremonies was prevalent right from the megalithic period.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Pupil understands the life of the primitive people and grasps the idea of the evolution of human life.
2. Learnt about the ancient technologies such as the uses of wheel and making of fire and develops a passion for innovation.
3. Realised the importance of social life, particularly village life and the protection of environment.
4. Understands the primitive agriculture and other occupations and realised the importance of food and other basic necessities required for human life.
5. Learnt the beliefs such as worshipping the dead, which has become part of our culture and realized that such values must be sustained.

SELF - EVALUATION

I. Say True or False:

1. There are no written records for the study of the pre-historic period.
2. Old Stone Age people lived in huts.
3. Agriculture was the chief occupation in the New Stone Age.
4. The custom of burial was practised during the New Stone Age.

II. Choose the Correct Answer:

1. The Old Stone Age man used ----- for dressing
(a) Cotton clothes (b) Woolen clothes (c) Barks and leaves
2. Old Stone Age implements were made of
(a) Quartzite (b) Soft-rock (c) Metal
3. Name the animal used by the New Stone Age man for hunting
(a) Horse (b) Bull (c) Dog
4. The first known metal to man
(a) Gold (b) Copper (c) Iron

III. Fill in the Blanks:

1. For the first time -----discovered the Old Stone Age implements at Pallavaram.
2. The Old Stone Age lasted up to-----.
3. Group life led to the formation of -----.
4. Metal Age in Tamil Nadu is called as----- Age.

IV. Match the Following:

- | | |
|------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Old Stone Age | (a). Agriculture |
| 2. Pottery | (b). Burial urns |
| 3. New Stone Age | (c). Food-gathering life |
| 4. Adhichanallur | (d). Wheel |

V. Answer Briefly:

1. Mention the important places where the Old Stone Age implements have been found.
2. What is the food of the Old Stone Age people?
3. How did the Old Stone Age man use the fire?
4. Write about the Old Stone Age paintings.
5. How did agriculture develop during the New Stone Age?
6. How the domestic animals were used in the Old Stone Age?
7. Write about the Dress and Ornaments during the Old Stone Age?
8. Write a note on Iron Age in Tamil Nadu.
9. How was a megalith built?

VI. Answer in Detail:

1. Write about the life of the Old Stone Age people.
2. Explain how the New Stone Age differs from the Old Stone Age.
3. Describe the life and beliefs of the Old Stone Age people.
4. Bring out the importance of the megalithic culture in Tamil Nadu.

Practical Exercises

1. Visit the Museum in the district headquarters and see the Stone Age implements.
2. Draw the pictures of the Stone Age implements in your notebook.
3. Have a discussion in your class about the use of wheel in human life. Think about the fact that so far no other suitable alternative has been found to replace the wheel.
4. Identify the sites of the Old and New Stone Ages in the map of Tamil Nadu.
5. Learn from your teacher and the elders about the urn burial.