

■ Pre-Historic Period and Proto-Historic Period

The pre-historic period is the era in which only archaeological sources are available for study and no literary sources are available. The period for which archaeological and literary sources are available for study but literary sources are not being used is called the proto-historic period. On this basis, Harappa civilization and Vedic civilization are categorized under the proto-historic period because one has a script that has not been deciphered yet, while the other has a language but no script.

But there is another basis of division as well. According to this, the era in which agriculture was not known is called pre-historic period. In other words, we will study the primitive man who used the tools made of stone and were dependent on hunting and food gathering. For example, Paleolithic and Mesolithic Age. On the other hand, the period in which agriculture started it was termed as the proto-historic period. Therefore, the study of those communities in the historical period those who had reached the stage of food production from the stage of food gathering. On this basis the Neolithic and Chalcolithic periods are categorized under the Proto-Historic period.

- **Paleolithic Period (millions of years ago to 10,000 BCE)** - The evolution of early man in India can be seen by linking it to the Stone Age. In the Indian subcontinent, human activities were visible from the Paleolithic period. During this period, man was dependent on hunting and food gathering.
- **Mesolithic Period (10,000 BC- to 6000 BCE)** - The period between the Paleolithic and the Neolithic was envisaged, it is

known as the Mesolithic period. In this period also, men were hunters and food gatherers, but some sort of change was visible.

- **Neolithic Period (after 6000 BCE)** – Neolithic period was a phase of transition, in which men reached to the food producing stage and started a settled life. Further, the way for the changes has been prepared. Initially in India, Mehrgarh in Balochistan was considered to be the earliest Neolithic site, but through recent research Lahurdeva in Uttar Pradesh placed as earliest one.
- **Chalcolithic Period (after 3500 BCE)** – Copper was the first metal to be used by humans. With the introduction of copper tools, the agrarian economy was strengthened. The earliest Chalcolithic site found in North-West India.
- **Harappa Civilization (2600 BCE-1900 BCE)** - Due to growth in agricultural production and advancement in trade, a part of North-west India moved forward in the direction of urbanization.

■ Understand the changes –

- Climatic factor → Technological change → Change in livelihood → Change in social relations → Change in cultural outlook.

■ Climatic factors :

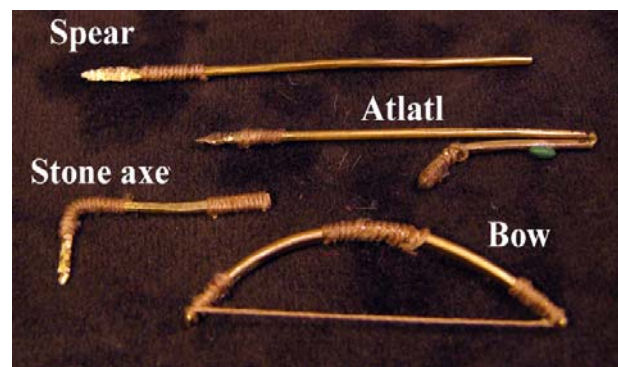
When we observe the climatic factor we get to know that the Paleolithic period occurred in geological epoch known as the Pleistocene. The Pleistocene was the ice age and which was not suitable for the vegetation. Later, the Holocene Era started from 10,000 BC in which global temperature rose and climate became moist and warm and this created a favorable conditions for the beginning of agriculture. Therefore,

agriculture began from the Neolithic Age and continued advancement in the future.

■ Technological Advancement :

In the Paleolithic period, people used tools made of stone and bones. During this period, there was a dominance of Core tools. Core tools are the tools made by breaking and shaping large stones. These include Hand axes, Chopper chopping and Cleavers. For example, evidence of chopper tools found from the Sohan river valley in Punjab, also the tools like hand axe evident from Madras in South. Apart from the core tools flake tools were also prevalent. Flake tools are tools made from smaller pieces of rock and these tools were sharp as well as light. For example scrappers, burins etc.

During Mesolithic period the development of Microlith can be seen. It ranges from 1 cm to 5 cm. They were too small to be used by themselves and would have been set into wooden or bone handles to make composite tools. As a result of this technological upgradation, bows and arrows came into use. Later in the Neolithic age polished stone tools came into use. In other words, earlier stone tools were made through breaking a stone through another stone but these tools were made through rubbing one stone against another. Thus, polished stone came into existence. Agrarian activities became relatively easy with the support of these tools.



■ Change in livelihood

During Paleolithic period, hunting and gathering were supposed to be the source of livelihood. Paleolithic people used to hunt mainly bigger animals and collect forest products.

Although people during Mesolithic period were still associated with hunting and gathering stage but definitely a change in hunting and gathering activities took place. Due to the use of bow and arrow, even smaller animals and birds could be hunted. Apart from that, hunting activities improved and fishing started, so there was better availability of food. For the first time from the sites Adamgarh in MP and Bagor in Rajasthan, we can trace evidence of domestication of animals. Furthermore, people started using wild variety of grains as well.

The Neolithic period is an important landmark in the history of mankind because now man was going to shift from the food gatherer to food producer in this period.

During this period, domestication of animals as well cultivation started on regular basis. Although, potteries came into use from Mesolithic age but regular use of potteries were started from Neolithic period. This age is known as the “Neolithic Revolution” because when agriculture started, it encouraged the significant change in the economy, social, and political fields.

Copper came to be emerged as the first metal to be used and this period came to be known as Chalcolithic Period. Copper tools also came into existence and these were definitely better than stone tools, thus, agrarian economy became stronger during Chalcolithic period.

■ Social Changes

Paleolithic society presented a model of band society. People did hunting and food gathering only for consumption. This society was an example of egalitarian society. As for male-female relations, we can say that as male members are supposed to be associated with hunting while female members with food-gathering and as food-gathering could feed the people in better manner, so it was more important. Thus, it is ordained that the condition of female was better during the Paleolithic period due to her important role in ensuring food.

The society of Mesolithic age was also an egalitarian society. This society was still at the level of band society, but the concept of family evolved as the old members of the family were left at home for looking after the kids. Apart from that, now burial of dead body started during that period.

During Neolithic and Chalcolithic period the level of production increased. Thus, the division in society also started. In fact, society is supposed to have moved from the stage of a band society to chiefdom. One can trace social differentiation in society on the basis of the construction of houses as well as granaries.

■ Cultural Changes :

Most of the early man's time was spent in maintaining a livelihood, but then gradually he started establishing companionship (exchange) with his environment. As a result, religion and art developed.

In fact, evidence of bone and stone idols in the form of art is found, but the main form of art is evident through the painting.

Development of Paintings – In the global context, the development of painting is believed to start from the Paleolithic period itself. We have got these pictures from continents like Europe, Australia and Africa. In the context of India, according to one view that some of the paintings at Bhimbetka in Madhya Pradesh are associated with the Upper Paleolithic period, but the general belief is that clear evidence of painting in India is found in the Mesolithic period.

■ How were paintings made in the Mesolithic period:

These paintings came into existence in two forms in the form of Petroglyph (engraving on wall or caves) and Painting. In painting, 16 different types of colours were used. These paintings were made either inside the caves or on the rocks outside the cave.

■ Themes of Mesolithic paintings:

- These paintings give a glimpse of community life. Hunting scenes, images of group dance and music, images of women collecting food, images of pregnant women, images of women nursing their babies, etc.





■ **Meaning of Mesolithic Paintings:**

- It is possible that in the absence of script, the Mesolithic people were trying to express their feelings through these pictures. In the absence of the script, it seems that paintings are trying to speak.
- Most probably, hunting paintings were drawn for a type of religious ritual so that they would remain successful in hunting activities and the hunter would have to bear less danger.

■ **Importance of Mesolithic Paintings:**

- In the absence of script, these prehistoric paintings help us to understand about early human beings and their lifestyle.
- It seems from the hunting scene that a sense of compassion was awakening in the hearts of the people. Often in hunting scenes, the hunters are depicted symbolically or in linear form instead realistic form. During the hunt, animals had to be injured and killed. These types of activities create a type of emotional tension. Therefore these scenes were presented in symbolic form. In this way, the paintings of the Mesolithic Period expressed the emotions of the primitive man. In the absence of the script, it seems that pictures are trying to speak. Hunting was a social act and the killing of animals was the result of a collective activity. Similarly, the absence of the single hunter painting also shows that the man did not want to directly associate himself with violence.

- These paintings depicted the pictures of community feasts and celebrations show that the spirit of collectivism was dominant in their lives and the spirit of the community was getting stronger.
- The scenes of dance and music in these paintings show that the search for 'rhythm' had begun in people's lives.

■ **Aesthetic sense of Mesolithic paintings:**

- Emerging sense of compassion in humans
 - Scene of mother cradling baby.
 - hunting scenes
- Finding the Rhythm

■ **How far the aesthetic sense of Mesolithic painting is comparable to modern painting?**

- The purpose of Mesolithic painting was to explore music. The purpose of the present painting was also to explore the music.
- There was symbolism in Mesolithic paintings and there is symbolism in the modern painting as well.
- Mesolithic painting depicts the simple expressions of primitive man whereas modern painting is the expression of complex human emotions of modern men.

Question: Rock paintings of the Mesolithic period in India represent not only the cultural life of that period but also the sophisticated aesthetic sense comparable to the modern painting. Critically evaluate this comment. (UPSC-2015)

Answer: The Mesolithic period represents the period when man was a hunter and food gatherer. He survived with the help of stone tools. But even in that period man expressed his understanding of the surrounding in the rare cave paintings.

Paintings of Mesolithic Period are found at different places which are associated with various periods like Bhimbetka in Madhya Pradesh, Suhagihat caves of Mirzapur,

Sundergarh & Sambhalpur in Orissa. These paintings have also been found in many places of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. These paintings include various scenes like hunting, group dances, music, tools, mother with her children, pregnant women, people taking dead animals etc. In this way, there is diversity in these paintings. An interesting fact is that these cave paintings depict men in linear form. For this reason, men were probably associated with hunting activities. During the hunt, animals had to be injured and killed. These types of activities create a type of emotional tension. Therefore these scenes were presented in symbolic form. In this way, the paintings of the Mesolithic Period expressed the emotions of the primitive man. In the absence of the script, it seems that pictures are trying to speak.

In the context of symbolism and diversity, this art painting seems to be somewhere close to the modern painting, although there is a difference in the form of the two. Mesolithic painting is an expression of simple human emotions. Primitive people were trying to understand their surroundings and they expressed this understanding in the form of a painting. On the other hand, modern life is much more complexity than life of Stone Age. The perception of modern humans is also multi-dimensional. Therefore, modern life with its full complexity is expressed in modern painting.

■ **Why do we study Mesolithic art?**

- These prehistoric paintings help us to understand about early human beings, their lifestyle, food habits, daily activities and, above all, they help us understand their thinking—the way they thought and help us to understand the aesthetic sense because they are the heritage of human civilization, that's why they are important even today.

India's first urban civilization: Harappa Civilization (2600 BC to 1900 BC)

■ **Where is the origin of such an extraordinary civilization as the Harappa civilization?**

Historians studying advanced civilization like Harappa civilization has always been a subject of interest and challenge. The main question is when different regions of Indian subcontinent were at the low level, a part of Indian subcontinent reached up to the level of urbanization. So, this phenomenon opened the gate of a plethora of controversies.

Earlier some British scholars tried to explain its origin in Mesopotamian context but this argument could not withstand scrutiny. There was wide difference in the nature of seals, script and town planning in both the civilizations. Therefore, because of these disparity it is not appropriate to consider the origin of Harappa civilization from the Mesopotamian civilization.

Through later researches its indigenous origin have been proved. The alluvial soil brought by floods in the Northwest river valley proved to be very fertile. This led to a large surplus agricultural production. Then agricultural surplus encouraged the development of crafts and industries. At the same time, a ruling class and a priestly class emerged. By taxing the surplus production and through religion were collected at a single center.

Then it is the same time when granaries were developed, bronze was developed from copper. It played an important role in production. Better land and water transportation facilities. In fact, this is the age when writing skill had also developed. The result of the above development was an advanced urban civilization around 2600 B.C. emerged.

■ Why is it considered as distinctive civilization?

Several factors have established it as a unique civilization and certainly the most important factor among these is the advanced town planning of Harappa civilization. The major factors can be explained as follows-

■ Advanced town-planning :

The distinctive town planning of Harappa civilization makes it unique from its contemporary urban civilizations. The cities were generally divided into two parts: the citadel and the lower town. Ruling class people resided in the citadel and some important buildings were built there. The lower town was a residential area for common people. The town was built in the shape of a chess board or grid manner. The width of the main road is about 10 meters and two roads intersected each other at right angles. Houses were built along the roads which had one floor to multi floors. There was a well in the courtyard and there were stairs to go to the upper floor.

An important element that attracts us in the town planning of the Harappa civilization is the developed water management system, which was rare in other contemporary civilizations. Drain pipes were then used to drain dirty water from the upper floors. There was better management of drainage in each house. The house drain was connected to the street drain and then the street drain was connected to the main road drain. Manholes were also built to clean the main drain.

The water conservation policy adopted by them is also unique. A vivid example of this is- Dholavira of Gujarat.

Harappan cities exhibit better governance because there are no instances of anywhere violating town planning regulations.



Harappan Fort

• Status of Common People :

If we compare the ruling class of the Harappa civilization with other contemporary civilizations, the difference becomes clear. The outlook of the people of the Harappan ruling class was relatively egalitarian. Where the ruling classes of Mesopotamia and Egypt spent enormous resources on building ziggurats (temples) and pyramids (monuments) respectively, while the common people lived in huts or mud-brick houses, whereas the ruling class of Harappa civilisation spent less on their own but tried to raise the living standard of their citizens. The common people lived in houses made of burnt bricks. Under the Harappa civilization, people enjoyed rare civic amenities.



Granary of Mohanjodaro



Lothal Dockyard



Dholavira Stadium

Question: To what extent, the town planning and culture of Indus Valley Civilization did give input to the present urbanization? Discuss. (UPSC-2014)

Answer: The Indus Valley Civilization, which represented the first urban revolution in the Indian subcontinent, also influenced the future urbanization of India. Its town planning and urban way of life were also being followed to some extent in the later period.

The Harappan people gave special importance to the town planning. Each important town was divided into two parts - the citadel and the lower town. Even in the present cities, the practice of keeping government institutions separate from residential areas is prevalent. Road, street and water management under Harappan civilization was exemplary. Special emphasis is laid on the construction of roads in the present cities also. Similarly, street and drainage system were also included in the ideal town planning. Harappan people used a large number of baked bricks. Even today, the importance of bricks remains in the construction work. Apart from this, like the Harappan cities, the present Indian cities also have a multi-cultural character.

But in some aspects, we have not been able to learn from the Harappan urbanization, for example, the governance of the Harappan people seems to be much better and its implementation side was also agile. Finally, while preparing the current town

planning, we need to be careful about why Harappan cities could not be sustainable despite all this unique characteristics.

■ **Harappan Culture (Religion and Art) :**

Religion has two aspects- metaphysics and ritualistic. On the basis of archaeological evidences, we get information about the ritualistic form of Harappan religion, but the metaphysics is still unknown to us. This is possible only after decipher of the Harappan script. After analysing the Harappan religion based on the available evidences, the following characteristics are visible -

- The people of this civilization used to worship the fertility cult, that is, the worship of Mother Goddess, the worship of the earth, the worship of fire or sacrifice, all these were related to the productive power.
- Its important feature is its pluralistic form. In other words, the worship of many goddesses and deities was prevalent at the same period. The emphasis of Harappan religion was on water worship, fire worship, tree worship, animal worship, fertility cult, mother goddess worship, snake worship, Pashupati Shiva worship etc.
- Idol worship was probably prevalent among the Harappans, as a large number of stone, copper and bronze idols have been found, but there is no evidence of a temple during that period. Then the relation of idol worship is linked with devotion.
- In the field of religion, the primacy of female element is seen.
- Amulets lying in children's neck indicate towards animism.

■ **Legacy of Harappa religion in Indian religious tradition:**

Although the Harappan cities declined, whereas, the elements of Harappa religion assimilated with the Indian religious tradition. The present Hindu religion is largely

indebted to the Harappan religion. Worship of the Mother Goddess, Pashupati Shiva's worship, tree worship, animal worship, fire worship, water worship, devotion and the otherworld were all part of the religious life of the Harappa civilization and these elements are seen in present Hindu religion.



Pashupati Seal and Mother Goddess Idol

■ Characteristics of Harappa Art :

The aesthetic sense of the Harappan people is expressed through their art. The Harappans produced a large number of artistic products – these artefacts are found in the form of seals, beads, bronze art, stone art and terracotta.

The seals of the Harappans were generally made of steatite. The seals were square and rectangular shape and the images of animal were engraved on them. They were used to identify the trade items. Similarly, other types of artefacts were beads. Most beads were made of steatite. However, Harappans used beads of semi-precious stone and beads of gold & silver have also been unearthed. The beads were used in jewel making.

The Harappan people were advanced in metal work. Evidence of copper and bronze statues of human and animals were found. A bronze statue of a nude dancing girl wearing a necklace has come to light at Chanhudaro. This is an excellent example of art. Lost wax technique is used in its manufacture.

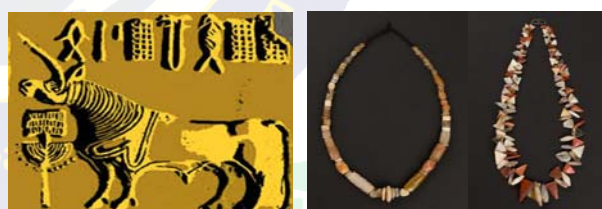
From different sites, statues made of stone have come to light but it is quite interesting

that almost all the statues so far collected appear to be in dilapidated form. Among these statues, one statue of a bearded priest unearthed from Mohenjodaro is superb.



Statue of priest and dancer from Mohenjodaro

A large number of terracotta sculptures have been found under the Harappan civilization. Terracotta figurines of humans, animals and birds have been found. On terracotta figurines, women got more representation than men. These idols were made of baked clay. These were either used for worship, or were used as children's toys. But recently a belief has emerged that clay idols are often used to decorate homes in urban life.



Harappan seals and beads

■ Legacy of Harappa Civilization in Indian Civilization:

The Harappa civilization represents an advanced urban phase. Around 1900 B.C. this civilization declined. The decline of civilization was initially taken to mean the end of civilization, but this perception has changed in recent decades. Now the meaning of the decline of civilization is change in the form of civilization, that is, it has reached the rural level from the urban level, but has not ended.

If we probe deeply, we find that the legacy of civilization is still present in our culture. This can be explained as follows -

1. Harappa civilization played an important role in the development of agricultural economy. Harappan people have a special contribution in the field of agriculture such as cultivation of two crops, the use of plough, etc. Similarly, the Harappan people started cultivating several crops simultaneously.
2. In the field of crafts and workmanship, the method of smelting copper and bronze, as well as pottery making, has been going on till today since the Harappa civilization.
3. Influence of town planning of Harappa civilization also relevant in present scenario.
4. Harappan influence can be seen on people's food habits, lifestyle, cosmetics etc.
5. In the field of religion, Harappan religion is considered to be the predecessor of Hindu religion. It had all the characteristics of worship of Pashupat Shiva, worship of Mother Goddess etc.
6. The Harappan influence cannot be underestimated even in the field of art, for example, copper and bronze statues, stone statues and terracotta figurines all carry the Harappan tradition till date.

■ **Scientific ideas of Harappans people :**

- The people of Harappa had knowledge of numbers. They were aware of stars and planets. They were having the knowledge of metal-forging. They were familiar with pictographic alphabets, basic mathematical knowledge i.e. calculation through 16 and its multiples, decimals and binary system, feet and cubic in measurement etc.

Question: The ancient civilization in Indian sub-continent differed from those of Egypt, Mesopotamia and Greece in that its culture and traditions have been preserved without a breakdown to the present day. Comment.

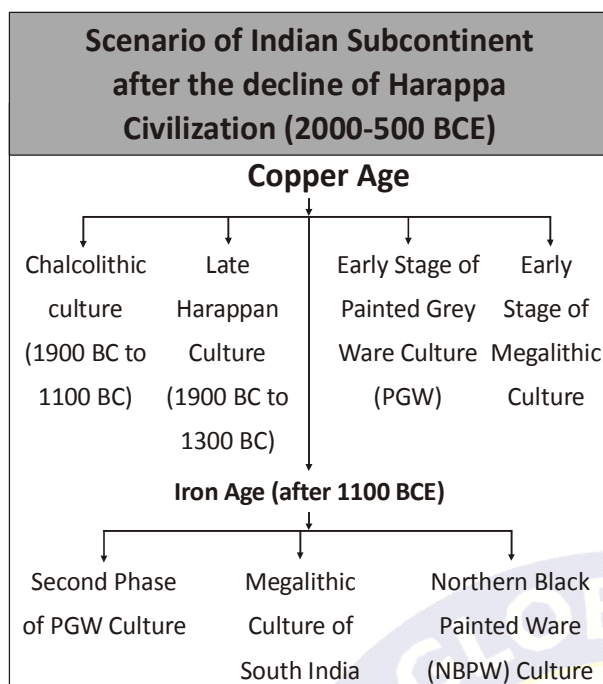
Answer : Indian civilization is unique from its contemporary civilization in various aspects. Egypt, Mesopotamia and Greece civilizations have perished or have been replaced by other cultures. However Indian ancient culture has an enduring character. Despite major changes and upheavals significant threads of continuity can be traced throughout the course of Indian history right up to the present day.

The earliest civilizations of Asia had developed in Egypt and Mesopotamia, but Islam conquered those areas and rapidly Islamized them. Ancient civilizations got suppressed and people could get acquainted with those civilizations only after coming in modern times. Similarly, the classical civilization of Greece and Rome was suppressed with the spread of Christianity in Europe. Then, after the European Renaissance in the 16th century, people could understand the heritage of that classical civilization.

On the contrary, the ancient culture of India never expanded. In the beginning, whosoever foreign invaders came, they assimilated with Indian culture. Then after 1000 AD, Islam brought an aggressive religious policy, but it could not convert India on a large scale. That's why Muslims remained a minority in India and the ancient culture of India could not be Islamised. The temple co-existed with the mosque and 5000 years old Vedic mantras continued to be recited in the homes of Hindus. Thus, we find that the ancient culture of India remained unique and distinct.

Model Question:

1. *However Harappa civilization declined till about 1900 BC, but the legacy of the Harappa civilization was existed in the Indian culture. Examine this statement.*



After the decline of Harappa civilization, once again Indian subcontinent reverted from bronze phase to copper phase and different forms of copper-using cultures came into existence. Later, Iron Age came into existence. Therefore, various cultures can be divided into copper phase and iron phase.

■ **Copper Phase** – Under this, we can understand the following cultures and discuss them :

- **Chalcolithic cultures** – After the decline of the Harappa civilization, the Harappan artisans moved to different regions. This further helps to promote the awareness of copper. This was one of the main reasons that, after the decline of the Harappa civilization, more Chalcolithic settlements and cultures developed. For example, Kayatha and Malwa culture in central India, Ahar or Banas culture in south-eastern Rajasthan and Jorwe culture in Maharashtra.
- **Late Harappan Culture** - These cultures were also Chalcolithic in their form, but since they were developed in the region of Harappan civilization and they were carrying the legacy of Harappan

civilization, hence they were known as Late Harappan culture. These culture include, Cemtery-H culture in Punjab, Haryana and Bahawalpur, Jhukar culture in Chanhudaro, Lustrous Red Pottery culture in Gujarat.

- **Early Stage of Painted Grey Ware Culture (PGW)** - Painted Grey Ware Culture (PGW) are generally supposed to be associated with Vedic Aryans. This culture was associated with two phases- Copper Phase and Iron Phase. So far total 750 sites have come to light in Indian subcontinent. These sites are spread to the region Punjab, Rajasthan, Haryana and Gangetic basin. Some important sites are- Nagar, Katpalan, Dadheri and Bhagwanpura. Therefore, these sites were considered to be the extension of Late Harappa Culture.

- **Early Stage of Megalithic Culture-** The people of megalithic culture were spread over the entire Indian subcontinent. Generally, Megalithic people were known for the construction of a unique type of graves. They used so construct various types of graves as memorial. Later, they were characterised as a separate culture. But Megalithic culture does not symbolise a single culture but a conglomeration of cultures. The initial phase of this culture is also associated with the copper phase. Before the Megalithic people, the Neolithic and Chalcolithic people continued the practice of burial inside the house, but the people belonging to the megalithic culture established their graves outside the residential area.

- Mostly Megalithic sites were discovered in South India but these sites were excavated from the other regions of the Indian subcontinent as well. For example, in Vindhya Range – Allahabad, Banda,

Mirzapur and Varanasi, in Northeast India – Manipur. Similarly, the evidence of megalithic sites also found from Devasa near Jaipur and Kheda near Fatehpur Sikri.

■ **Iron Age (after 1100 BCE)**

- **Second Phase of PGW Culture** - The first phase of this culture was associated with the copper phase and the second phase with the Iron Age. The earliest evidence of this culture is found from Ahichhatra. Farming tools like sickle and spade have been obtained from Jakhera. Paddy has been obtained from Hastinapur and barley and wheat from Atranjikhhera.
- **Megalithic culture of South India** – This culture was essentially associated with the Iron phase, for example, Maski,

Brahmagiri in Karnataka, Nagarjunakonda in Andhra Pradesh, Junapani and Mahurjhari in Maharashtra.

- **Northern Black Painted Ware (NBPW) Culture** - Northern Black Polished Ware represented the fine quality of pottery. Therefore, it is characterise as deluxe pottery. A culture named after it is known as NBPW culture. It is supposed to have started from 800 BCE onwards. It was having a larger geographical reach starting from Takshila in North-west to Tamluk in Bengal and Amravati in South India. From its early phase, it was associated with urbanization, burnt bricks and Punch marked coins. Therefore, it corresponded to Buddha Age.

