

1. OVERVIEW

- Transitional stage between Upper Palaeolithic and Neolithic.
- Corresponds to the late Pleistocene–early Holocene phase (Ice Age to Holocene).
- Marks the beginning of food-production and village-farming economy.
- Recognized as a distinct archaeological level.
- Regionally varies; some areas show earlier development of food production.

2. DISTRIBUTION & CHARACTERISTICS

- Distribution of Mesolithic sites is very vast.
- Easier to notice in areas without microliths than in areas with them.
- Microliths are not known in a limited section of the Ganga plain near Banaras.
- Hilly areas of the northeast lack clear evidence.
- More common than palaeoliths in the sense that they are far more visible in the subcontinent.

3. MICROLITHIC TOOLS

- Microlithic industry is easy to identify.
- Implements usually less than 1 to 5 cm long.
- Made mostly on short, parallel-sided blades.
- 'Pigmy' versions of Upper Palaeolithic types: points, scrapers, burins, awls, etc.
- Also lunates, crescents and geometric shapes: rhomboids, trapezes, triangles.
- Early Mesolithic evidence in India is limited; microlithic sites are very vast.
- Microliths more common than palaeoliths in the sense they are far more visible in the subcontinent.



4. INVENTION OF WHEEL

- One of the most important mechanical inventions.
- Nearly every machine since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution is based on the wheel.
- Principle is same as ancient potter's wheel (used in Mesopotamia as early as 3500 BC).
- First use: transportation on Mesopotamian chariots (~3200 BC).
- Used in vehicle manufacturing before widespread adoption.
- Reached high level in Aztec and Maya civilizations.
- Evolved fully in Europe by the beginning of the 19th century.
- With the Industrial Revolution, it became the central component of technology and was used in countless mechanisms.



MESOLITHIC CULTURES IN INDIA

5. EXCAVATED SITES (Early Mesolithic)

- Very limited knowledge; only 7–8 sites with proper evidence.
- Sites in: Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar.
- Assortment of rock paintings in Central Indian highlands (Uttar Pradesh to Gujarat).
- At least two 6th millennium BC sites: Bagor and Adamgarh—evidence of domestication of cattle and sheep/goat and early hunting-gathering activities.



6. BHIMBETKA CAVES

- Located ~45 km northeast of Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh.
- Discovered accidentally in 1957–58 by Dr. Vishnu Wakankar (Vikram University, Ujjain).
- Excavations yielded remains from Lower Palaeolithic Age to Early Medieval Ages.
- Rock paintings date back to ~15,000 years.
- Most ancient scenes belong to the Mesolithic Age.

Themes in Rock Paintings

- Scenes depict everyday life:



Hunting, dancing, horse & elephant riders, animal fights, honey collection, decoration of bodies, disguises, masks, different types of animals, etc.

Animals Depicted

- Wide variety of animals:



Bison, tiger, rhinoceros, wild boar, elephants, monkeys, antelopes, lizards, peacocks, etc.

Other Features

- Depicts detail of social life over a long period.
- Popular religious & ritual symbols occur frequently.
- Colours used: mainly red & white; occasionally green & yellow.
- Colours prepared by combining manganese, hematite, soft red stone, etc.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Mesolithic cultures in India represent a transitional phase marked by microlithic technology, wide distribution of sites, early food-production activities, and rich rock art traditions, especially at sites like Bhimbetka.