

From Gathering Food to Growing Food - The Earliest People

Have you wondered how your family obtains the food you eat? How is the food grown and what tools are used in this process? Who invented these tools?

Can you imagine the life of people who did not grow any crops and only lived by gathering what grew naturally?

Look at the pictures given below to get an idea of the lives of people who lived thousands of years ago.



Fig. 3.1

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Fig. 3.2

- In above figure how are the people gathering their food?
- What types of clothes are they wearing?
- You will find five or six types of tools and weapons in these pictures. Can you identify them?
- Look at Fig 3.2. What have the men and women brought from the forests?
- Describe the work they are doing in the picture.

- Can you list the items that you eat which are not grown but collected from the wild? How do you prepare them for eating?

If you were sent to a forest would you be able to find out what edible food can be found there? You need to know what food is edible, where it grows and when it bears fruits. You may also need to know how to eat it. Can it be eaten raw? Does it have to be cooked or pounded or ground with something else or soaked in water?

Gathering food and hunting

Thousands of years ago all people lived by collecting fruits, flowers, honey, wild grains and edible tubers and roots that grew naturally in the forests and also hunted birds and animals. They did not grow any crop or rear any animal.

Even to hunt, the hunters need to know the hunted animal intimately, its habits and behaviour. Where does it spend different parts of the day? Where does it eat or drink water from? In what way is it dangerous? What is the use of its different parts of the body? The earliest people over many generations had learned about all these things and taught them to their children.

- Can you think of the differences and similarities between the food habits of the earliest people and your own food habits?
- Do you think they could have worn clothes like you? What would they be wearing?

Stone tools

Today we use machines, tractors and tools made of steel etc. The earliest people also used tools; but these were made of stones, bones and wood. Initially large stones were given sharp edges by very careful breaking with another stone. This gave the people a tool which enabled them to cut flesh, dig the earth for tubers and hunt animals.

After thousands of years they began to make fine, small pieces from hard stone.



Fig. 3.3 How stone tools were made: One of the Techniques is shown here.

These pieces were called 'microliths'. They were fixed to wooden or bone handles which then served as knives, arrows, sickles etc. These weapons were used to dig soil, chop the trees for the bark, remove the skins of animals, clean the skins, stitch clothes out of the skin, cut meat and bones,



Fig. 3.8 Use of microliths: stone sickle

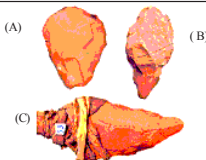


Fig. 3.4 (A), (B) Earliest tools which were largely excavated at Amarabad, Mahaboobnagar district (C) Early Hand axe excavated in Kamakur Village, Pottisreeramulu Nellore district.



Fig. 3.5 Tools made from stone flakes excavated at Amarabad, Mahaboobnagar district.



Fig. 3.6 Blades chipped from stones excavated in Yeleswaram, Nalgonda district



Fig. 3.7 Microliths from Ghanapur, Adilabad district

chop fruit and roots and hunt the animals easily.

These stone tools of the early people have survived to this day and we can learn much about the lives of early people by studying the tools they used and the locations from where they were found.

- For what purposes are stones used by people today?

Fire

The discovery of fire by the early people brought about great changes in their lives. Probably they made fire by striking two stones. Fire enabled them to eat roasted meat in place of raw flesh. This was the beginning of the cooked food. They also

used fire to keep off wild animals and provide light in the caves. Wood was often heated on fire to harden it for use.

- What do we use fire for, now-a-days?
- Try to make fire by striking two flint stones near cotton or dry leaves to get a feel of earliest man's life.

Nomadic life

The earliest people used to live in small groups in the caves or under trees or rocks. They did not build houses. Actually they led a mobile life, constantly moving from one place to another. People who regularly move from place to place are called "Nomads".

Kurnool caves

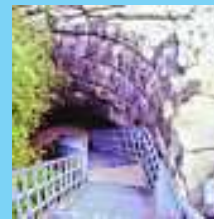


Fig. 3.9 Entrance of Belum Caves in Kurnool Dist.

Archeologists have recovered a large number of stone tools from the caves of Kurnool district. There are hundreds of caves in Kurnool district near Betamcherla and Banaganapalli. These caves seem to have been used by stone tool using hunter-gatherers as resting place for thousands of years.

Animal bones, stone tools especially microliths and also tools made of bones have been found in them. Tools made of bones are to be found only in these caves in the entire Indian Subcontinent.

Archeologists are people who study the past by digging up old places where people lived and taking out remains of their lives like tools, bones, pots, buildings etc.



Fig. 3.10 Bone tools found in Murchalla Chintamani, Gavi cave, Kurnool.

- Can you think the reasons for early people's movement from one place to another constantly?
 - o What will happen if a group finishes all the fruits or animals of an area?
 - o Do animals stay in the same place or do they keep moving?
 - o Will water be available in the same place throughout the year?
- Even today many people shift from one place to another. What kind of things do they carry with them while shifting?
- When the earliest people were migrating, what would they have carried with them?
- Why people in present times are not leading a nomadic life but have built houses and live in the same place?

Paintings

The early people drew pictures of animals and hunting scenes on the walls of many caves and rock shelters. Different colour stones were ground and mixed with animal fat. Pictures were then painted on rocks with bamboo brushes. Perhaps drawing pictures like these had some religious importance for them.

- Do people in your place draw pictures or designs as part of festivals and religious rituals?

Chintakunta is in Muddanur Mandal of Y.S.R. Kadapa District. There are ten rock shelters near it which have paintings of early people. There are more than 200 paintings in white and red colour. But there are only ten white paintings. They are religious symbols. In the red colour paintings humped oxen are found in only one cave, which is locally called as Eddula Aavula Gundu. In the remaining we can see paintings of deer, stag, fox, rabbits, birds, human being, etc.

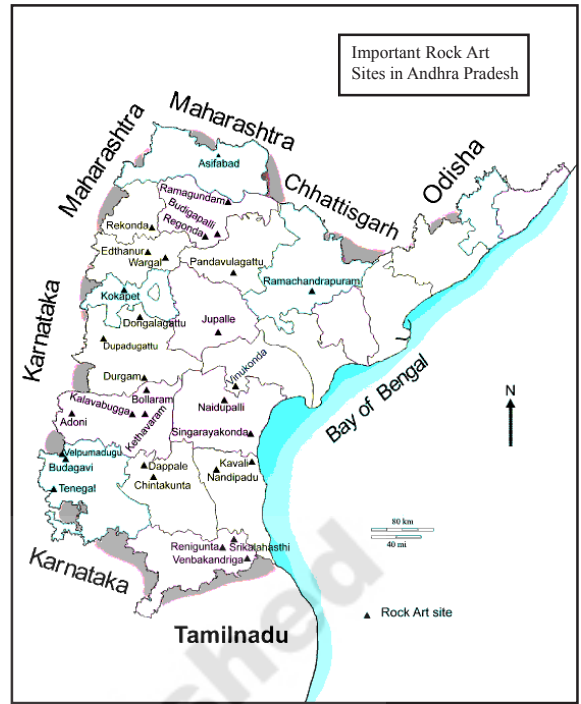


Fig. 3.11



Fig. 3.12

Fig. 3.11, 3.12 The pictures of men with bow, arrow and oxen drawn by the earliest people found in Chintakunta caves in YSR Kadapa Dist.



Map 1: Important Rock Art Sites in Andhra Pradesh

Hunter-gatherers in our times

Even these days several groups of people live by hunting and gathering food in different parts of the world. In our own state the Yanadis and Chenchus till very recently lived in this manner. Scholars have tried to live among them and understand their lives. From many such studies done all over the world, historians try to imagine the lives of people who lived in the forests thousands of years ago.



Fig. 3.13(a)



Fig. 3.13(b)



Fig. 3.13(c)

Fig. 13 a, b, c Chenchu hunter gatherer 80 years ago.

Shared living

We saw that the early people lived in small groups and led a nomadic life. It appears that women and men both participated in hunting and food gathering. Women and children were more active in food gathering and hunting of small animals. Hunting large animals may have taken many days of tracking to distant places – this was probably done mostly by men.

Hunter-gatherers shared the food they collect with all the members of the group. There wasn't much scope for storage of food as it consisted mainly of perishable things like meat, fish, fruits, leaves, tubers and small quantities of wild grains. Grains

and pulses which we eat today do not perish so quickly. We also have jars and tins to store them for months. But, the earliest people did not possess such heavy things as they had to constantly move.

Since they shared all the food and had free access to the resources of the forests, hunter-gatherers did not have any rich or poor among them. They were all equal and treated each other equally. They also took all important decisions by discussing together.

Even though they hunted wild animals hunter-gatherers had a great respect and regard for the forests, the plants and trees, the animals, rivers and hills. They often worshipped them so that they may get enough food all the time.



Fig. 3.14 Offering thanks to a hunted deer.

We can imagine the life of early people who hunted and gathered food in the forests.

- Why couldn't the early people store food for a long time?
- Do you think it would have created any problem if the hunter-gatherers did not share their food?
- Why were there no poor people among them?

- Do you find any similarity between thanking the killed animal by the earliest people and worshipping the harvest by the farmers now-a-days?

From gathering to growing food

For thousands of years human beings lived by hunting and gathering. They took to growing crops only about 12,000 years ago. Why did they change their life style? Let us find out.

Around 12,000 years ago there were major changes in the climate of the world, as it increasingly became warmer. It led to great change in natural vegetation as large tracts of forests were converted into grasslands. These grasslands provided fodder for grazing animals like cattle, sheep and goats. They also had grains that could be eaten by human beings. As they began to contact closely with these grasses and animals they gradually tried to control them. This is called domestication of plants and animals. Let us see what this meant and what it led to.

Learning to grow crops and tend animals

Men, women and children probably keenly observed the places where edible plants were found, how new plants sprouted from seeds etc. Perhaps they began looking after plants – protecting them from birds and animals so that they could grow and the seeds could ripen. Many people who lived in grasslands where edible grains grew began to rely more on these grains for food and took to growing them. In this way

different groups of people in different parts of the earth became farmers.

Different people in different places learnt to grow paddy, wheat, barley, pulses, millets, tubers and vegetables. When people came into contact with each other they learnt from each other how to grow and use different kinds of crops and vegetables.

Likewise, people may have allowed gentle animals to come near their camps and eat grass and other leftover food. They may also have protected these animals from other wild animals. In the process the herders got plenty of benefits like regular supply of meat, animal skin and milk. They later on used oxen and donkeys for carrying loads and ploughing the fields.

Domestication

People usually select those plants and animals that give good yields and are not prone to disease etc. Seeds of such crops are selected and used for sowing in the next season. And only animals of selected type are allowed to breed. Thus plants and animals tended by people become different from the wild ones. When people sow selected crops and protect them till they bear fruit or when they allow selected animals to breed and protect them for their own use, it is called domestication.

In this way over hundreds of years people reared and propagated plants and animals beneficial to them in some special way.

- Do you think farmers still use domestication method to select better seeds for the next year?

- How do you think people protect the crops they select to sow?
- How do people protect the animals they want to breed?

Of course not all people took to growing crops or rearing animals. Many people continued to hunt and gather in the forests. And again not all people practised agriculture in the same way. Initially many people practised shifting agriculture like the "Podu" (you will read about it in chapter (6) and also combined a little hunting and gathering from the forests along with growing crops.

Some of them realised that the fertility of the soil could be maintained by tilling and applying manure. When they began using the plough and animal manure they did not have to go in search of new fertile lands every few years. This also meant that they had to combine farming with rearing animals which were needed for ploughing, transporting and for manuring the soil and other purposes.

Settled life

When people began growing plants, they had to stay in the same place for a long time looking after the plants, watering, weeding, driving away animals and birds – till the grain ripened. At the harvest time they got so much grain that they could not eat it all at once. It had to be stored for long periods - about six months to one year. All this meant that people had to stay in one place and build houses to store the grain.

When staying at one place became inevitable, they constructed huts of stone,

wood, mud and dried grass. Vessels were needed to store and cook grain, water, milk, etc. It led to the making of pots of different kinds. They also started painting and decorating the pots to give them a better look. Cooking also required the making of stoves and stones for grinding corn etc. When archeologists dug up the places of early agricultural people, they usually found marks of the huts; remain of pots, stoves, microliths and grinding stones. Sometimes they also found some grains which got over-roasted in fire and thus were preserved for all these years.

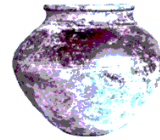


Fig: 3.15 An old pot. What do you think could have been stored in this pot?



Fig: 3.16 Archaeologists have found remains of food preserved 12,000 years ago.

The early farmers needed to clear forests by cutting trees and branches. They developed a new kind of stone tool which is called neolith by archeologists.

The early farmers selected the right kind of stone which was ground on rock to give it an axe like edge. This axe head was then fixed to a wooden handle and used to cut trees, etc. By growing crops with the new tools the early people began a process which changed almost all aspects of their lives in a very fundamental manner. It is after this new kind of stone tool that this period of early agriculture is called Neolithic Period.



Fig: 3.17 Axe head fixed to a wood, excavated at Amarabad, Mahaboobnagar.



Fig: 3.18 Neolithic stone tools made by grinding stones excavated in Serupalli, Mahaboobnagar. Source: A.P State Archeological Museum, Hyderabad



Fig: 3.19 Archeologists digging an ash mound in Palavoy, Anantapur.

- Can you imagine how did the early people store grains?
- Why do people who grow crops have to stay in the same place for a long time?
- Imagine and draw the huts used by the earliest people. How do you think they will be different from your homes?

We find earliest evidences for cultivation of crops from Baluchistan about 9000 years ago. In India there are evidences in Kashmir around 5000 years ago and Bihar some four or five thousand years ago.

The earliest evidence for domestication in the Deccan comes from the border of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. In these states large mounds of ash are found in a number of places.

Archeologists believe that around five thousand years ago hunters of these areas began to rear cattle. The cattle were pegged in special places in which a lot of cow dung used to dry and accumulate. These were probably set fire on festival days causing the ash mounds. Such ash mounds are found in Kurnool, Mahaboobnagar and Anantapur Districts. Along with cow dung ash, neolithic stone axes, stone blades and rudimentary handmade pots were found. After a few thousands years many of these people also started cultivating crops and settling down in villages.

Key words

Hunter gatherer
Stone tools
Microliths
Nomads
Shared living
Domestication
Herders
Settled life
Neolithic
Archeologist
Podu agriculture

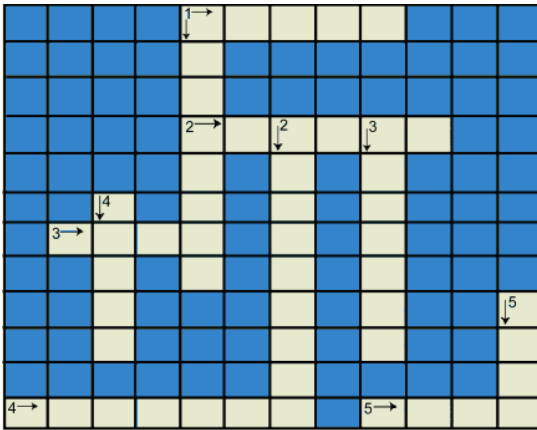
Improve your learning

1. Why do you think earliest people did not wear cotton and woollen clothes?
2. What tools would you use today for cutting fruits? What would you do if these tools are not available?
3. Compare the tools used by the earliest people with those of modern times.
4. Why did the earliest people travel from place to place? In what ways are they similar to/ different from, the reasons for which we travel today?
5. Find out if there are any rock painting sites near your place and visit them with your class.
6. Locate the following Rock Art sites in the map of Andhra Pradesh:
A. Chintakunta. B. Pandavulagattu C. Kethavaram
D. Velpu Madugu E. Rekonda F. Ramachandrapuram
7. List three ways in which the present lives of farmers and herders would have been different from that of the Neolithic people?
8. Prepare a list of domesticated animals and agricultural products of earliest people and write a few lines about each of them.
9. If there was no stove and no grinding stone, how would it affect our food?
10. Prepare a list of five questions that you would like to ask an archeologist.
11. There are many things in the picture given below. Which of these things did not belong to the hunting-gathering people? Which things could have belonged to both the hunting-gathering people as well as the agriculturists? Put different signs to distinguish them.



Fig: 3.20

12. Solve the crossword puzzle using the clues given below.



Clues :

Across :

1. These were the shelters of the earliest people (5).
2. These people regularly move from one place to another (6).
3. Shifting agriculture (4).
4. A new kind of stone tool developed by the earliest people (7).
5. This was also used by the earliest people to make their tools (4).

Down:

1. These people are called hunter-gatherers in our times (8).
2. A small piece made from a hard stone (9).
3. These animals were used to carry heavy loads and plough their fields (7).
4. The earliest people collected this to eat (5).
5. Flesh of animals was roasted with this (4).

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