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Socio–Economic changes in 4th-6th century A.D.

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Abstract
The archaeological record over such parts of the world as have been extensively dug up shows roughly the following sequence: Lowest, hence earliest are crude bits of chipped stone. These were used as tools, along with pieces of wood and bone that have generally perished.
This Old Stone Age (Palaeolithic) made several very slow advances over a hundred thousand years or more in the technique of stone-tool chipping. It was ultimately succeeded by the age of polished stone tools (Neolithic). In between the two came what was called the Mesolithic Age, a term not now in fashion; its extent and duration are indeterminate. These underlying strata, bearing tools only of stone (and presumably of bone, wood, and horn) were covered in time by other layers with remains of metal tools and metal weapons.

Keywords: social, B.C, trade

Introduction
Trade over long distances was in full swing by 3000 B.C. or even earlier. Bronze was at best rather rare and remained in the possession of a few. This meant differentiation of society into classes. The Bronze Age saw considerable fighting and raids over large distances for control of metal ores and of good sources of water. In the second millennium B.C. (2000-1000 B.C.) there were numerous tribes on the move, with an ample but mobile food supply (usually cattle), who wandered the Kurasian continent.
The older river-valley agrarian cultures of Egypt and Mesopotamia had developed city-states, monarchies, temple priesthoods and warfare a good thousand years earlier. Such development was local and exceptional. The present age is archaeologically that of iron, the metal which is cheap enough and widespread enough to make agriculture a universal possibility.
Some agriculture did emerge in the Late Stone Age, so that we can speak of a 'neolithic revolution' in the means of production. But this was restricted to certain favoured places where it was not necessary to clear away heavy forests: Mesopotamia (Iraq), Egypt, the Indus valley, highland plains in Iran, Turkey, and Palestine, and parts of the Danube valley loess corridor; perhaps some loess areas in China. Iron, though softer than bronze when first prepared, did enable forests to be cleared and the plough to be used in heavier soils. It was the first metal that was available to many, not the monopoly of a tight warrior class.
The first farmers who could build towns go back to 7000-8000 B.C. at Catal Huyuk (Turkey) and Jericho (Palestine); but their technique of producing food could not be widely applied to the neighbouring terrain. Their farming, unlike that in Egypt and Iraq, remained a supplement to food-gathering and herding till iron became available in quantity towards the end of the second millennium B.C.
The first widely used metal was copper, which can be reduced from its ores by a kiln not more efficient than that needed for pottery; pottery is to be found along with stone tools in the Late Stone Age. Copper is too soft to be useful without working, and then too brittle unless properly alloyed with some metal such as tin, which gives bronze. Since tin is not widespread, the Bronze Age implies considerable exploration.
The first good processes of iron manufacture seem to have been a closely guarded monopoly of the Hittites in what is now Turkey. Iron was so rare even in 1350 B.C. that the Pharaoh Tutankhamen was buried in a solid gold coffin, in a tomb full of copper, gold, bronze, ivory, and other precious objects, but with an iron amulet bound below his skull.
The discovery of cheap iron did not mean happiness for the majority. The small isolated farming communities of Asia Minor had often been swept away even in the Bronze Age by raiders. Only when abundant manpower (often slaves or helots bound to the soil) was available did the use of iron mean more food - with more oppression. There remained (almost to this day) a few isolated tribal people, away from trade routes, who stubbornly persisted in Stone Age techniques of food-gathering rather than change to production. They dropped out of the advance to civilisation.
The casual use of stone continued from prehistory well into history. Many Saxons of King Harold's army were armed with stone axes at the battle of Hastings in A.D. 1066, though England had entered the Iron Age long before Julius Caesar's invasion of the island in 54 B.C. It is not easy to characterise food-gathering society as a whole. The modern romanticist school believed that primitive man must be a noble savage, a child of nature uncorrupted by civilisation, free from vices and cupidity. This fiction of a 'natural' earthly paradise began with a letter of Christopher Columbus to Queen Isabella of Castille.
The explorer, having failed to reach the golden cities of India, was anxious to show that he had at any rate discovered something extraordinary - Caribbean man in the natural state. European imagination thus stirred up found something not in the Bible (after the Garden of Eden) nor the Utopias of the Greek-Latin classics rediscovered by the Renaissance.

The social theories of Rousseau and the devastating satire of Voltaire against the society of his day gained strength from this discovery of Natural Man. Some people even now talk of primitive communism as if it were an ideal state of society in which all shared alike and satisfied their simple needs by co-operation. Carried to its extremes, this is again the legend of the 'Golden Age' in pinkish modern garb. Early food-gathering society was severely restricted. Its special character was determined in each locality and period by the scanty and uncertain food supply.

Review of Study

John *et al*. (1996) [1] described that a careful archaeologist like Grahame Clark estimates the Upper Palaeolithic population of England and Wales as perhaps 250 human beings in ten small bands; in the Mesolithic, 4500 for Great Britain as a whole, 20,000 in the Neolithic at any one time, and less than double this number in the second millennium B.C., when the Bronze Age and food production were well under way. It is not possible to give corresponding estimates for India, so poor is the necessary archaeological evidence at present. However, it would be surprising if the Stone Age population exceeded one per ten square miles over any extensive region of the Indian sub-continent.

Chaudhri *et al*. (1978) [2] described that even where nature is kind, it is not uniformly bountiful at all seasons; there may be several consecutive years of scarcity. A large total population and fixed settlements are out of the question without some form of food storage. The preservation of food comes comparatively late in food-gathering life. It needs salt obtained from some distance for meat and dried fish; also containers such as baskets, leather bags, pottery. Not all food can be preserved.

Shireen *et al*. (2011) [3] described that the best forms for storage are nuts, grain, and some roots. Most of these are not digestible without cooking, which implies control of fire and some pottery or utensils. Long before advancing to this stage man had already developed particular ways of social life, because he had already lived as a tool-using animal for many thousands of years. Two features are obvious. If food cannot be preserved, it must be eaten fairly soon. This means sharing any surplus, or most humans would starve; but many animal groups also share their surplus. In primitive human groups which go beyond the stage of utter scarcity the sharing eventually became a social obligation, say the need to give feasts on special occasions. It does not mean that every person had equal right to the share of all food gathered.

Sharma *et al*. (1995) [4] described that food-gatherers rarely collect or kill more than they can use; there is no greedy accumulation or slaughter of game for pure sport, letting the meat rot. To this extent the legend of the 'Golden Age' has some truth. However, most of primitive man's energies were absorbed in the search for food. The largest food-sharing unit, always limited in size by the environment, tended to concentrate upon some one type of food, say an animal, fish, bird, insect, fruit, or tuber. This meant not just specialisation but over specialisation. The human unit regarded itself not only as a kinship group but as of the same substance as its principal or favoured food.

Zaheer *et al*. (1996) [5] described that other human groups specialising in some other food object were not in the kinship and at first not even considered as human. We may call this special food the totem, though at a much later stage inanimate objects or parts of an animal could be group-classifying totems also. The particular aptitude for gathering the totem food was associated with special ritual. Sacrifice of some sort (including human sacrifice) and other ceremonies were meant, however blindly, to secure the increase of the (special) food supply, hence of the particular semi-parasitic human group that ate it. These ceremonies are important to us because they contain the seeds of modern human cultural activities.

Narhar *et al*. (2004) [6] described that the dance, perhaps with some people imitating the animal, others the hunters, was ritual as well as practice for work in the field, a drill in the technique of the hunt, as it were. The ballet and the drama would develop from this after many millennia. Pictures of wild animals drawn with remarkable faithfulness in the Ice Age (French and Spanish caves) now count as masterpieces of art. Nevertheless, the original pictures could not have had art as their main purpose. They were drawn with the aid of dim tallow lamps or torches in pitch-dark subterranean caverns where daylight never penetrated.

Bahekar *et al*. (2001) [7] described that the pictures often overlap and spoil each other. Excellent animal sculpture was used for ritual target practice, as shown by the holes made by spears and arrows; these sculptures are also underground, in the very womb of Mother Earth. Pairs of coupling animals carved or moulded on the cave walls show that all such artistic expressions were part of what are called fertility rites, the exclusive secret of the particular group. Animals, too, may form exclusive communities within the same species because of restricted food supply.

Research Study

The use of the word 'race' in common parlance is rarely valid at any stage. The extant races developed later from large populations that grew out of pools of common groups; the development of language was sharper. The advantages were not the result of experiment, planning, or reasoned action. Those groups that adopted the new scheme of exchange increased in numbers and efficiency; the rest were driven to extinction. The first step, a dialectical inversion, was the banning (tabu) for each group of its special food, the totem.

The tabu would be broken only at special seasonal ceremonies or in connection with the cult of the dead. With the tabu on totem food came a tabu on sexual intercourse within the totem. Thus tribes were formed out of several totemic clans.

No member of a clan was normally permitted to partake of the clan-totem food or to cohabit within the totem clan; nor could he 'marry' outside the tribe. Often, he could not accept food prepared by individuals not of his own tribe. Members of the clan retained special cults from which all other clans were excluded. There were also similar cults common to the whole tribe, as was the tribal language. Once formed, this tribal organisation beyond the small clan provided a model that has left its mark on most human societies.

So far the statements have been general. The picture has been restored from conjecture and reasoning based upon reports of observations all over the world. Nothing specific has been said about India, simply because the data are much too meagre. There is no reason to believe that early developments in India took any course materially different from the

foregoing. If prehistoric changes occurred as suggested above, many features of rural and tribal Indian society as well as old Sanskrit texts would be logically explained; if not there would be no reasonable explanation. Two special characteristics of Indian prehistory must be noted. The last Ice Age was neither so hard nor so extensive over the Indian sub-continent as over Europe.

Hereafter, India is taken as a geographical unit also including Pakistan with a part of Afghanistan and at times of Burma. No political claims or motives should be imputed to this extension. Whereas there was an Ice Age in the north, the south and south-east escaped altogether. There is every likelihood that the eastern parts of India proper were penetrated by prehistoric people from Yunnan and Burma. The movement may even have continued well into historic times. The stone tools of this eastern region show common materials and technique.

Secondly, foodgathering apart from hunting or fishing remained much easier over most of India and had a far greater range than in Europe or elsewhere on the Eurasian continent. Where half a dozen cereals, peas and beans make up almost the entire variety of European staple foods, even a region of average fertility like Maharashtra has over forty kinds of indigenous staples, most of which are cultivated but can also be found wild* All are suitable for storing.

These include rice and wheat, millets, sorghum, barley; with a considerable variety of vegetable proteins, and seeds like sesamum that produce edible oil. Pepper and spices give good taste as well as vitamins. A balanced diet is possible without killing any living creatures, especially as milk, butter, curds and cheese, fruit and vegetables can be had without taking animal life. This simple fact was later to revolutionise Indian theology and religion with the doctrine of non-killing (ahimsa). At the same time, it makes the historian's task more difficult than elsewhere. People could and did survive in the food-gathering stage when their immediate neighbours had become food-producers centuries earlier. Peasants and tribal people, especially in out-of-the-way places in the jungle, normally know over a hundred other natural products beyond the staples, which may be gathered without cultivation: fruits, nuts, roots, tubers, honey, mushrooms, leaf vegetables, etc. With the older mode there would always remain older beliefs and ways of life.

India is a country of tremendous survivals for this very reason. It becomes difficult to say precisely when a given stage passed and another took over. The process of acculturation was mutual. Not only did advanced immigrants influence aboriginals in every part of India but the newcomers (before the intolerant Muslims) generally took over some indigenous and even aboriginal beliefs and customs. To constitute a proper society, a set of human beings must be in some productive relationship which involves the creation and transfer of surplus.

Significance of the Study

In India the formation of such a society and of its culture was - because of the ease and survival of food-gathering- based to a considerable extent on religion and superstition. This reduced the amount of violence (force) necessary, as compared with Europe or America. We have now two main tasks: To say whatever is known about prehistoric man in India; and to trace primitive survivals as the contribution of prehistory to modern Indian society. The great difficulty in tracing prehistoric man in India is the problem of dating. Prehistory survived late in the south when the north was already developing historical empires.

The few Indian cave paintings discovered show battle scenes of feudal times in the top layers. How old the pictures underneath might be is anyone's guess. Prehistoric tool-making man in India as in the Soan valley (W. Pakistan) generally used the Levallois technique in flaking his stone tools. This is not the oldest method of tool manufacture, but roughly the second oldest. The date may be (at a rough guess) 50000 to 100000 B.C. Hand axes of this type can be traced over the whole Eurasian continent.

Nothing can, so far, be said of any corresponding movement of human beings. By 7000 B.C., however, large deposits of much smaller stone tools (microliths) are found from Europe to Palestine. Their continuity through caves inhabited by prehistoric man in Iran and Afghanistan makes it likely that the Indian specimens are not much later. There is no reason to believe that such little stone tools originated in India to spread out into the rest of Eurasia. Microliths are first found with larger stone hand axes and scrapers, perhaps as waste products of manufacture. The Mesolithic Age showed a remarkable development in many parts of the world in that microliths are then found in considerable deposits without any larger tools at all (the age of polished stone tools, Neolithic or Late Stone Age came later). This happens for example at Jericho, in the pre-pottery B layer. The absence of pottery is also significant.

Conclusion

In India, such purely microlithic pre-pottery ‘cultures' have also been traced, as for example from the sand dunes (teri) of the south-east coast. These Teri cultures are roughly dated at 4000 B.C. or earlier. A thousand years is as close an approximation as can be made by known methods for such dating. No radiocarbon or other tests have so far been possible. These microlithic people left their deposits of beautiful little chalcedony flakes and cores along narrow tracks all through the western peninsula. The most productive microlith sites are by minor streams with fishing-pools in ancient times, though the pools are now generally silted up because of modern deforestation and erosion. The same erosion of the soil exposes the stone-tool deposit on the banks while showing the absence of occupation strata.

These users of microliths were not in the crudest stage of food-gathering. Their tools are too small to be used as we find them. From comparison with the practice of African Bushmen, it is obvious that the Indian pieces of chalcedony, beautifully faceted and sharpened by chipping or cutting fine teeth in the edge, were part of compound tools. The chips were set in handles of wood, horn, or bone by means of tree-gum or some such adhesive.

This is also proved by discoloration on some facets, away from the cutting edge. Thus could be made javelins, barbed harpoons, arrows, knives, sickles, etc. Some types of small flints are known, in fact, to be sickle-teeth, which means that grain collection was already in progress, whether the grain was planted or natural grasses cut for their seed. These tools are ideally suited for skinning animals, 'tanning' their hides by scraping off the flesh and breaking the fibres under the

skin; suited also for splitting basket-maker's withes or preparing fish for the pot.

In Karnataka, Andhra and granite-based country, these megaliths were found to belong to the Iron Age. In Maharashtra (based on Deccan trap), the megaliths seem to be much older, but later than the best microliths. Many of the rock piles in the western Deccan might be due primarily to nature; but prehistoric man left his mark upon them in the form of deep engravings. The grooves were made entirely by rubbing, or at least finished by rubbing. The amount of labour expended is shown by the depth of grooves, which is at times as much as centimetres. The stone is hard enough even to turn the edges of modern steel tools.

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