

Early Societies

Class 6 Social Science

Complete Study Notes

Learning Objectives

Understand the hunter-gatherer lifestyle of early humans and learn why they moved from place to place. Study the creation of stone tools, the discovery of fire, and the massive shift from hunting to farming and herding. Understand how these revolutionary changes laid the foundation for permanent settlements and human civilization.

Introduction to Early Societies

The journey of human civilization began millions of years ago when early humans lived in forests, grasslands, and river valleys. They depended entirely on nature for their survival, obtaining food by hunting wild animals and gathering fruits, roots, seeds, and other forest products. During this period, there were no permanent houses, no farming, and no modern technology. Their lives were completely based on adapting to nature and living together in small groups.

Over time, humans made several groundbreaking discoveries. Learning to make stone tools, using fire, and beginning agriculture were critical phases in human history that completely transformed their way of life. These changes ultimately paved the way for permanent villages and the development of major civilizations.

The Hunter-Gatherer Lifestyle

Early humans are called hunter-gatherers because of the way they obtained their food. They hunted wild animals, caught fish and birds, and gathered fruits, roots, nuts, seeds, honey, and leaves from plants. Every member of the group cooperated to secure enough food for survival.

These early societies did not live in permanent places. When resources like plants and animals ran out in one area, they had to move elsewhere. Wild animals also migrated in search of food and water, forcing hunters to follow their movements. Furthermore, different plants and fruits bore fruit in different seasons, causing people to shift locations according to the time of year.

The Search for Resources: Water availability was another primary reason for migration. Many rivers and ponds dried up during certain parts of the year, forcing early humans to look for fresh water sources. They preferred to live near rivers, forests, and regions where high-quality stones were easily accessible to manufacture necessary tools. Natural cave sites like Bhimbetka in Madhya Pradesh provided critical shelter from rain, heat, winter weather, and wild animals.

Stone Tools and the Discovery of Fire

Stone tools were the most important survival instruments for early humans. They shaped these tools by striking one stone against another or chipping away smaller flakes to create sharp edges. These

instruments were used for hunting, cutting wood, scraping animal skins, preparing food, and making weapons like spears and arrows.

Gradually, humans discovered the uses of fire. Traces of ash found in the Kurnool caves prove that early humans used fire regularly. Fire provided them with warmth during winters, light in the darkness of night, and safety by keeping dangerous wild animals away. Cooking food on fire also made meat tastier, safer, and much easier to digest. The mastery of fire is considered one of human evolution's greatest milestones because it made life far safer and more convenient.

The Beginning of Farming and Herding

Around 12,000 years ago, major environmental changes took place as the Earth's climate became relatively warmer, leading to the development of vast grasslands. Grains like wheat, barley, and rice began growing naturally. Early humans closely observed how plants grew, how seeds fell, and how new plants sprouted from them.

Slowly, people learned to sow seeds themselves and cultivate crops. They also began domesticating animals such as sheep, goats, cattle, and dogs. This provided them with a reliable source of food, protection, and assistance in farming activities. Once agriculture became successful, people no longer needed to migrate constantly. They settled in permanent villages near fertile land and reliable water sources. They built houses, stored grain, and eventually started exchanging extra goods when production exceeded their immediate needs.

From Nomadic Life to Permanent Settlements

The historic transition from hunting and food gathering to farming was one of the most significant events in human history. After establishing permanent settlements, people constructed stronger homes, developed new occupations, and adopted a more organized lifestyle. Various new crafts emerged, including pottery-making to store grains, weaving cloth, construction, and advanced tool manufacturing.

Permanent living also enhanced cooperation between families and communities. People exchanged goods, created common rules, and laid the foundations of an organized society. These early agricultural villages eventually evolved into large towns and magnificent ancient civilizations.

Significance of Early Societies

Studying early societies helps us understand the long journey of human development. It shows how through intelligence, hard work, and mutual cooperation, humans overcame the severe challenges of nature and gradually improved their standard of living. This chapter reminds us that many major features of modern life—such as farming, animal husbandry, the growth of villages, and community living—are deeply rooted in the discoveries and experiences of early humans.

Practice Questions

1. Why are early humans called hunter-gatherers?
2. Why did early humans move from place to place?
3. How were stone tools useful to early humans?
4. What changes did the discovery of fire bring to human life?
5. Why is the beginning of farming considered a major turning point in human history?

Answer Key

- **ANSWER 1:** Early humans are called hunter-gatherers because they survived by hunting wild animals and gathering fruits, roots, seeds, and other forest products for food.
- **ANSWER 2:** They moved in search of food, water, migrating wild animals, seasonal plants, and suitable stones to make tools.
- **ANSWER 3:** Stone tools were used for hunting, cutting wood, preparing food, scraping animal skins, and making weapons like spears and arrows.
- **ANSWER 4:** Fire provided light, warmth, protection from wild animals, and the ability to cook food, making life safer and much better.
- **ANSWER 5:** Farming allowed people to grow their own food, settle in permanent villages, domesticate animals, and lay the foundation for an organized society and civilization.