

Early Societies – From the Beginning of Time

Introduction

Early human societies developed over millions of years. The history of humans begins with the evolution of **early hominins**, who gradually developed the ability to walk upright, use tools and communicate. Archaeological evidence, fossils and genetic studies help us understand the lives of early humans.

Human Evolution

Early Humans

Humans belong to the biological family called **Hominidae**. Human evolution took place over a very long period.

Some important early human species include:

- Australopithecus
- Homo habilis
- Homo erectus
- Homo sapiens

Early humans gradually developed larger brains, better tools and more complex social behaviour.

The Earliest Humans

Walking on Two Legs

One of the most important developments in human evolution was **bipedalism**, or the ability to walk on two legs.

Walking upright helped early humans:

- See their surroundings more clearly
- Carry food and tools
- Travel long distances
- Use their hands for other activities

Stone Tools

Importance of Tools

Early humans made tools mainly from **stone**, wood and bone. Stone tools were used for:

- Cutting meat
- Breaking bones
- Scraping animal skins
- Digging

- Hunting and gathering

The development of tools shows the growing intelligence and skills of early humans.

Homo Erectus and Fire

Discovery of Fire

Homo erectus was one of the early human species associated with the use of fire.

Fire was extremely important because it helped humans:

- Cook food
- Keep warm
- Protect themselves from wild animals
- Provide light
- Live in colder regions

Cooking also made food easier to digest.

Hunter-Gatherer Societies

Food Collection

For most of early human history, people lived as **hunter-gatherers**. They obtained food by hunting animals, fishing and collecting plants, fruits, roots and nuts.

They generally moved from one place to another in search of food and water. Therefore, they were **nomadic**.

Division of Work

Hunter-gatherer groups often divided work according to age, skills and physical abilities. Cooperation was essential for survival.

Language and Communication

Development of Communication

Early humans gradually developed different forms of communication. Language helped them:

- Share information
- Warn others of danger
- Teach skills
- Organise group activities
- Strengthen social relationships

The development of language was an important step in the growth of human societies.

Caves and Rock Art

Early Art

Early humans lived in caves and temporary shelters. They also created paintings and engravings on rocks.

Rock art often represented:

- Animals
- Hunting scenes
- Human figures
- Symbols

These paintings provide valuable information about the beliefs and activities of early humans.

Migration of Humans

Movement Across the World

Early humans gradually migrated from **Africa** to different parts of the world.

They moved in search of:

- Food
- Water
- Better climate
- New hunting grounds

Over thousands of years, humans spread across Asia, Europe, Australia and eventually the Americas.

The Beginning of Agriculture

Neolithic Revolution

Around **10,000 years ago**, some human groups began to cultivate plants and domesticate animals.

This major change is often called the **Neolithic Revolution**.

Agriculture allowed people to:

- Produce their own food
- Live in permanent settlements
- Store surplus food
- Develop larger communities

Domestication of Animals

Animal Rearing

Humans began domesticating animals such as sheep, goats, cattle and dogs.

Animals provided:

- Meat
- Milk
- Wool
- Labour
- Protection

The domestication of plants and animals changed human life permanently.

Permanent Settlements

Village Life

With the development of agriculture, people began living in permanent villages. They built houses and developed new occupations.

Surplus food allowed some people to become:

- Potters
- Weavers
- Toolmakers
- Traders

This led to greater division of labour and social development.

Archaeological Evidence

Sources of Information

We learn about early societies through:

- Fossils
- Stone tools
- Bones
- Rock paintings
- Burial sites
- Archaeological remains

Scientists use these sources to reconstruct the lives of people who lived thousands or millions of years ago.

Key Points

- Human evolution took place over millions of years.
- Early humans gradually developed upright walking and larger brains.
- Stone tools were essential for survival.
- Fire helped humans cook food, stay warm and protect themselves.
- Hunter-gatherers depended on hunting, fishing and gathering.
- Early humans were generally nomadic.
- Language improved communication and cooperation.
- Rock paintings provide information about early human life.
- Humans migrated from Africa to different parts of the world.
- Agriculture and animal domestication began around 10,000 years ago.
- Farming led to permanent settlements and the growth of villages.
- Archaeological evidence helps us study early human societies.

Chapter Summary

Early human societies developed over millions of years through gradual biological and cultural changes. Early humans learned to walk upright, make tools, use fire and communicate. For a long time, people lived as nomadic hunter-gatherers. They gradually migrated from Africa to different parts of the world. Around 10,000 years ago, agriculture and animal domestication began, leading to permanent settlements, division of labour and the development of more complex societies. Fossils, tools, rock art and archaeological remains help us understand this important period of human history.