
UNIT 5 HUNTING-GATHERING

Structure

- 5.0 Introduction
- 5.1 Nature of Evidence
- 5.2 Geographical Spread
- 5.3 Characteristics
- 5.4 Regional Variations
- 5.5 Summary
- 5.6 Exercises
- 5.7 Suggested Reading

5.0 INTRODUCTION

Hunting-Gathering is generally considered that earliest stage in the social evolution of human groups for which evidence for organized community life appears with a regularity. The bulk of this evidence is archaeological in nature and it is supplemented by anthropological data. Records of the any other kind, with the exception of painted depictions of community life, are not available. The archaeological evidence, it must be said, is rich and is quite useful in reconstructing an account of the hunting-gathering stage of society. The archaeological method accounts for both ethnographic connotation and technological context and thus helps us understand the features of hunting-gathering stage in a fairly detailed manner. We plan to initially examine the nature of evidence and subsequently use this evidence to reconstruct, as far as helped by the evidence, the characteristics of hunting-gathering societies. It is our intent to simultaneously understand the eco-environmental context in which hunting-gathering societies emerged and flourished. We also aim at trying to understand regional variations among hunter-gatherers and the subsistence pattern of regional groups among the hunting-gathering societies.

It is an interesting feature that the time span occupied by the hunting-gathering societies is overwhelmingly long as compared with minuscule span shared by all the subsequent stages of social evolution. During the hunting-gathering stage the human groups were totally dependent on natural resources for their sustenance as they did not possess any knowledge of agriculture with the help of which they could have grown their food. Hunter-gatherers collected their food from the natural surroundings in which they lived. This food consisted of fruits, edible roots, forest produce such as honey and berries, and at places fish and birds. In addition they also hunted animals for meat.

This complete dependence of hunting-gathering societies on resources obtainable naturally from their environment during the major part of

human existence has curious implications. It means that the way they acquired their food determined the attitude of hunter-gatherer communities to their environment. Again, since these communities lived in groups and were not necessarily homogenous, considerable differences in traditional attitudes and practices appear to have existed. Another significant feature of the early human groups on the Indian subcontinent is that distinct social stages at different levels of cultural and technological development have often co-existed and survived for a long time. Thus hunter-gatherers, nomadic pastoralists, shifting cultivators and even settled agriculturists have survived in self-contained co-existence. There have been some regional variations which are a result of divergent climatic and environmental conditions. Even with regional variations these communities have survived as self-contained social groups. As a matter of fact this kind of interchange with environment has attributed a peculiar character to South Asian life - styles.

5.1 NATURE OF EVIDENCE

The most plentiful material remains connected with hunting-gathering communities are stone tools and implements. In fact the other material, if any, might have been of perishable type and therefore has not survived. Stone being a hard imperishable substance has succeeded against all natural odds and has revealed to us the information on hunter-gatherers. This principal evidence is ably supplemented by the pictorial depictions made by hunting-gathering communities of later periods. These have survived on the walls, ceilings etc. of the cave shelters that were seemingly used by these communities. No other records pertaining to them have survived and we have to bank almost solely on the surviving assemblages of stone implements and tools for reconstructing the living patterns of hunting-gathering communities. In this task we are greatly helped by the methods, techniques and reconstructive devices developed by the archaeologists and the anthropologists, though this also entails some limiting possibilities.

The bulk of the evidence relates to stone tools and implements which were crafted by the contemporary people for their use. These tools were made of selectively chosen stone material. They were also crafted with a definite purpose and with an economy of effort and material both. The assemblages of these stone tools survive at specific locations which conform to one or more requirements of their manufacture. Besides the availability of suitable material, the other considerations were perhaps an abundant supply of water and food. The archaeologists unearth this material evidence and relate it with the cultural context of its assemblage so that the seemingly mute stone tools assume a vibrant character. This makes it possible to reconstruct the main contours of contemporary societies, that is the life-styles of the hunting-gathering communities. In the process we are further helped by the pictorial depictions made by the hunting-gathering people as they give us an idea about the economy and society of the pre-historic people. These pictures which apparently

are visual expressions of the occurrences in the life of contemporary communities, on a detailed scrutiny communicate for more intense tidings. Together they – the material evidence of stone tools and implements and the rock art – help us recreate the ambience of hunting-gathering communities in much sharper focus than ever before.

The emergence of the stone age is generally attributed to the Pleistocene period – that began at about 1.8 million years ago. We would have been lucky to possess material remains in a state of pristine preservation from such a remote past. But that was not to be. This remoteness has in fact been a disadvantage as environmental changes during the in between period have disturbed the context of the stone tool assemblages. Our evidence on stone tools and implements has therefore to be weighed carefully for its value in reconstructing the social life of the contemporary humans. V.N. Misra suggests: “Because of the length of time involved and the changes in landscape and climate, most of the early (Pleistocene) sites have been either obliterated or disturbed by natural and human agencies. Also, the contemporary biological material which could tell us about subsistence, ecology, technology, structures, etc. has in most cases not been preserved. What has survived is a plentitude of stone tools, often dislocated from their original context, and buried in secondary deposits. Such archaeological material has very limited value for cultural, ecological and chronological reconstruction, though there are some relatively undisturbed surface sites which could be usefully exploited for palaeoecological reconstruction using the present as a key to the past. From the beginning of the Holocene the preservation of both sites and biological material is better. But, in the final analysis, precise information for cultural and ecological reconstruction can come only from excavated primary archaeological sites. The number of such sites is, however, as yet very small. The cultural and ecological reconstruction of early hunter-gatherer societies which follows has therefore to be seen against the background of these limitations” (‘Stone Age India: An Ecological Perspective’ in *Man and Environment*, XIV(I), 1989, p.17).

The stone tool assemblage pertaining to the hunting-gathering communities have been classified by the archaeologists as belonging to two major stages of evolution – the Palaeolithic stage and the Mesolithic stage, based on a set of noticeable differences between the two. Since stone tools and implements are the principal evidence providing leads into the social structures of hunting-gathering communities, the evolutionary features discernible from these differences are of great value. They may help us understand, at least, the outer contours of hunting-gathering societies and their interchange with their environments.

The Palaeolithic stage relates to the early period of the use of stone tools by human groups. Even here the manufacture and use of stone tools has not been a static process. Significant evolutionary changes are quite visible within the stage. As stated by Allchins, “the Palaeolithic industries of the Pleistocene can be divided into three major groups, on the basis of the shape, size and methods of manufacture of the principal

artifact types. The Lower Palaeolithic is characterized by hand axes, cleavers, chopping tools, and related artifact forms. Middle Palaeolithic industries are characterized by smaller, lighter tools based upon flakes struck from cores, which in some cases are carefully shaped and prepared in advance, the Upper Palaeolithic by yet lighter artifacts, and parallel-sided blades and burins”.(Bridget and Raymond Allchin, *The Rise of Civilization in India and Pakistan*, CUP, Great Britain, 1982, p.33). It is clear that the sequential order of the three sub-stages indicates a continuous process of technological development which must have adjusted with the contemporary environmental setting.

The Mesolithic stage appears after the end of the Upper Palaeolithic period. It is generally considered as a transitional phase between the Palaeolithic period and the beginning of agriculture during the Neolithic period. There was rise in temperature and the climate became warm and dry. The climatic changes affected human life and brought about changes in fauna and flora. The technology of producing tools also underwent change and the stone tools of microlithic variety were used. “A progressive change and development in the stone industry towards smaller, more delicately made and varied artifact types” was distinctly noticeable, (Bridget & Raymond Allchin, *op.cit.*, p.79). Man was still in the hunting-gathering stage but there was a shift in the pattern of hunting from big game to small game hunting and fishing and fowling also began to be practiced. These material and ecological changes are also reflected in rock paintings.

5.2 GEOGRAPHICAL SPREAD

At present the general agreement among the archaeologists and anthropologists is that the early emergence of man in India belongs to the Lower Palaeolithic stage. The geographical expanse in which the stone tools belonging to this stage have been found runs over the entire country except a few areas. The region of its spread is mainly covered by the Siwalik hills in north-west India and Pakistan and upto Chennai in the South. The area from where stone tools of the Lower Palaeolithic stage have not been found mainly consists of Western Ghats and the adjoining coastal region, north-east India, and the plains of the river Ganga.

On the basis of their typology, the stone tools and implements of the Lower Palaeolithic stage have been classified into two technological traditions – the Sohanian and the Acheulian. The Sohanian tools mainly consist of choppers, flakes and cores and the Acheulian tools mainly consist of cleavers, hand-axes, scrapers and blades. This difference is notable since it indicates a difference in the eco-environmental settings of the two traditions. Likewise the absence of Lower Palaeolithic tools from a few regions, as indicated above, also suggests a peculiar environmental setting not conducive for the growth of this stage.

The Sohanian tools were first reported from the Sohan river which is a tributary of the Indus. “The faunal remains from this deposit included

the horse, buffalo, straight-tusked elephant and hippopotamus, suggesting an environment characterized by perennial water sources, tree vegetation and grass steppes,” (V.N. Misra, *op.cit.* p.18). The Acheulian tools have been found so extensively that it is suggested that the “first effective colonization of the country was achieved by the makers of the Acheulian culture.” The hunter-gatherer populations practicing this tradition were adapted to a wide variety of ecozones. These zones ranged from semi-arid western Rajasthan, Saurashtra and Gujarat alluvial plain to sub-humid dry as well as the moist deciduous woodland zones of Central India, the Deccan Plateau, Chhota Nagpur plateau and the Eastern Ghats and the south-east coast (Cf. V.N. Misra, *op.cit.*, p.19).

There is a particularly dense and rich concentration of the sites of this tradition in central India and in the southern part of the Eastern Ghats. The reason for this concentration seems to be a favourable environment – adequate rainfall giving rise to good vegetation cover which in turn sustained a rich variety of wild animals. This also explains the absence of Acheulian sites from Western Ghats, north-east India and the Ganga plains. In the Western Ghats and north-east India perhaps heavy rainfall resulted in the growth of such dense vegetation that human settlements became difficult. The absence from Ganga plains is explained by the paucity of stone as raw material for making tools and implements.

The next major change was the emergence of the Middle Palaeolithic stage. The hunter-gatherers of this stage occupied largely the same regions and the same habitats as occupied by the Acheulian tradition. The only regions which showed sparse occupation were western Rajasthan and the Mewar region and Gujarat plain. Most of the “Middle Palaeolithic occupations occurred at open-air sites along perennial as well as seasonal streams, along hill slopes and on stable dune surface... and in rock shelters as in Central India.” (V.N. Misra, *op.cit.*, p.21).

At about 10,000 years from now the Upper Palaeolithic stage appeared accompanied with arid climate and sparse vegetation and animal life. This restricted the food resources of hunters-gatherers and with that the population might also have fallen. There is a noticeable sparsity of sites in Rajasthan and Gujarat as also in Central India. Only in the Eastern Ghats do we notice more extensive occupations. Some of the sites in this area are exceptionally large covering nearly five acres and yielding an assemblage that runs in thousands.

The Mesolithic hunting-gathering communities are generally considered the last of the group, a successor of the Upper Palaeolithic stage and the predecessor and sometimes a coexisting community with the agriculturists. The Mesolithic sites far out number all the other sites of the preceding periods. The density of these sites, it may be noted, also increases greatly.

The main areas occupied by Mesolithic people covered the arid and semi-arid plains of western Rajasthan and north Gujarat, the rocky Mewar plateau, hills and forests in central India and Orissa, the Chhota Nagpur

plateau and Deccan plateau, the Mumbai coast and Telengana plateau and Eastern Ghats. Some of those territories are also occupied by Mesolithic people that had remained uninhabited in the previous periods. These included the Ganga valley, Damodar valley, the Kerala coast and the Southern Tamil Nadu coast. The forest-covered alluvial plains of the Ganga valley were effectively colonized by the Mesolithic pioneers. Nearly 200 sites of this period have been located in the south central part of the valley in Allahabad, Pratapgarh, Jaunpur, Mirzapur and Varanasi districts. (Cf. G.R. Sharma, V.D. Misra, D. Mandal, B.B. Misra and J.H. Pal, *Beginnings of Agriculture: Excavations at Chopani – Mando, Mahadaha and Mehagara*, Allahabad, 1980.)

The diversity in occupation available from this period has been aptly described by V.N. Misra: “Mesolithic communities exploited a greater variety of habitats than their predecessors. In the Gujarat plains they settled on sand dunes on the shores of interdunal lakes and in the Mewar plain on elevated rocky ground as well as on river bank dunes. In the woodland zones of the Vindhya and the Kaimur Range they occupied caves and rock shelters as well as open-air locations. The limestone caves in the Kurnool district of Andhra Pradesh were also occupied during this period. In the wooded ecosystems of the interior Peninsula there are numerous sites right in the habitat of the shifting cultivators of the present day. Along the west coast, near Bombay, the Mesolithic groups settled on the tops of hills and rock outcrops near the sea coast. Near the tip of the Peninsula, on the east coast, there are occupations on coastal sand dunes (*Teris*). These coastal occupations are suggestive of marine food exploitation. Likewise, the occupations on the shores of ox-bow lakes in the Ganga valley (e.g. Sarai Nahar Rai, Mahadaha and Damdama), those close to water falls in the Telangana plateau (e.g. Gauri Gundam and Pochara), around Chitrakot Falls in Bastar, and in the riverine niches of the Eastern Ghats indicate considerable dependence on aquatic food resources,” (V.N. Misra, *op.cit.*, p.25).

5.3 CHARACTERISTICS

The popular perception that hunting-gathering communities lived a primitive life closer to barbaric behaviour is a far-fetched imagination. Based on the stone tool assemblages, the sites of their find, and the pictorial depictions available at rock shelters it is possible to deduce important details. Some of the characteristic features that emerge from this indicate that hunters-gatherers lived a social life that was composed of family, local groups and wider social ties beyond the immediate family/local group. The stone tools and implements associated with them strongly suggest that the more notable ones came from large factory sites, each of which would have catered to a large area, and as suggested by Allchins, “perhaps also been used by communities of many different kinds and sizes.” Further, “The means of distribution of this high quality raw material must have been either through many people visiting the site or by those living near it having a system of exchange with people from other groups. There are examples of trade or exchange from many early

settlements, which overlap in time with Mesolithic communities” (Bridget & Raymond Allchin, *op.cit.*, pp. 62-3).

The information on stone tool assemblages and the pictorial depictions at rock shelters collated together present an interesting scenario. Alchins say that “dancing scenes in the caves of Central India depict gatherings which must have included quite a number of families or bands. Occasions such as these are known to have provided hunter-gatherers in many parts of the world, including groups in Central India, South African Bushmen and the Australian Aborigines, with the means of exchanging objects of interest and value, and also of strengthening wider social ties, beyond the immediate family or local group. Therefore it seems highly probably that they did so in the case of the Stone Age inhabitants of many parts of India. Such gatherings would also facilitate the passing on of stone working and other techniques” (Bridget & Raymond Allchin, *op.cit.*, pp. 63).

Accounting for different stages of stone tool manufacture we find that the quality of stone tools and implements evolved with each succeeding stage coming into existence and along with this the interchange between hunting-gathering communities and their environments also got altered. The stone tools of the Palaeolithic period were used for different functions which besides hunting and butchering also included shattering and breaking open bones for taking out the marrow. These tools were also used for digging the roots and tubers and in some cases for making other tools. In the succeeding periods the heavy tools of the core-variety such as choppers gradually went into oblivion. Their place was taken by tools mainly made of flakes and blades. Several kinds of scrapers, points and borers now came into vogue. The sites now preferred places which provided quartz and basalt as the basic raw material. Clearly, many of these tools were used for making spears with the help of which the animals could be hunted from a distance. Pictorial depictions on the rocks clearly give scenes where animals were killed with the help of several spears thrown by the hunters-gatherers, from distance without making a direct physical contact.

The microlithic stone tools suggest a distinctly changed behaviour. The hunting was now undertaken with the help of devices that were the prototypes of traps, snares, nets. It is suggested by V.N. Misra that the hunter-gatherers of this period also used the gum of several species of Acacia, lacquer from the nests of tree ants, and a kind of milky juice which hardened on exposure to air into a black catechu-like substance for hafting purposes. Similarly, various strands of thin cords were made into a net for fishing (V.N. Misra, *op.cit.*, p.24).

The characteristics of the Mesolithic hunting-gathering communities are vividly presented in the pictorial depictions in caves and rock shelters in the Vindhya Region and Kaimur Hills. “The hunting scenes at Bhimbetka and other caves and rock shelters show the hunt of a variety of game with spears, bows and arrows, all tipped and barbed with microliths, hunters chasing (in one scene there are 80 individuals in the

expedition) and cornering the game; shooting arrows at the prey; transporting the kill (to the home base); butchering; fishing by using net traps (26 varieties of fish have been recorded in the rock painting); and trapping of small game, birds, rats and turtles (See Nos. 526). Women are shown participating in cornering the game. Other food gathering activities shown in the paintings are collection of fruits, women carrying baskets full of fruits; honey collection; and using rubbers and querns.(V.N.Misra, *op.cit.*,p.26).

Another significant feature connected with this stage relates to the evidence on the mode of the disposal of dead. The practice of burying their dead appears in the archaeological record for the first time from the Mesolithic stage.

5.4 REGIONAL VARIATIONS

The discussion given above must have made it clear to you that the hunting-gathering communities existing during the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic stages were by no means homogenous communities sharing in common all the characteristics. The surviving evidence, in fact, makes a strong case for considerable regional variations among them mediated largely by the interchange between the hunting-gathering communities and their specific environmental settings. In this section we shall examine this interchange and shall make an attempt to delineate the consequent regional variations.

In the Lower Palaeolithic stage we have already noted the existence of two different strands of hunter-gatherers – the Sohanian and the Acheulian, and their different environmental setting. While Sohanians remained located in the valleys of the Himalayan flank, the Acheulians adapted to a wide variety of ecozones and within these broad zones occupied microhabitats that show quite a diversity. The camping sites of Acheulian hunter-gatherers were located:

- 1 along lakes and pools in wide flood plains of shallow meandering streams;
- 1 on stable dune surfaces and on extensively exposed gravel beds;
- 1 in rock shelters in Central India;
- 1 in the open, along perennial as well as seasonal streams; and
- 1 on gravels in peninsular rivers.

Similarly the regional variations in Acheulian hunter-gatherers did also come about based on the raw material used for tool making. While quartz and quartzite were the most preferred material, use was also made of dyke basalt as in western Maharashtra and even limestone as in Karnataka and coarse grained granite as in northern Bundelkhand.

The middle Palaeolithic stage developed at a time when glaciations in high northern altitudes was taking place. This had given rise to conditions of strong aridity in regions bordering the cold northern altitudes.

Rajasthan, Mewar and Gujarat had come under the spell of aridity and therefore show sparsely located sites belonging to the hunter-gatherers. The valleys of central Indian rivers, Chambal, Narmada & Son along with their tributaries abound with camping sites of hunting-gathering communities.

Some notable changes in tool making technology also took place during the Middle Palaeolithic stage. The use of bifaces declined and flakes and blades took over. “These were made by the application of retouch, that is, by finely trimming the edges of parent flakes by the removal of tiny thin flakes or chips.” (V.N. Misra, *op.cit.*, p.21). The use of quartz and quartzite, and basalt was slowly shifted to include the use of chert and jasper and fine-grained siliceous rocks. An important point to remember here is that transport of raw material over long distances for tool making had come to be practiced even if in rudimentary form. The hunting-gathering communities regularly visited the sites of tool factories from where they collected finished tools.

The regional variation became more clearly discernible during the Upper Palaeolithic stage as they got associated with some significant environmental changes in the Indian sub-continent. A major part of Rajasthan suffered from the drying up of Himalayan drainage. Except for the north-western corner of the state between Jaisalmer and Ramgarh there developed sand deposits and sand dunes. Similar aridity engulfed the other northern and north-eastern areas. The green environment now survived in the peninsular India. There was thus a notable shift in the hunting-gathering communities’ camping sites towards south. The main stone tools from this stage were scrapers, burins and retouched blade tools. From a site in Kurnool Caves an assemblage of bone tools have also been found. The ecosystems in South were rich in plant foods like fruits, nuts, bamboo shoots and grain and leafy vegetables and mushrooms. Another significant feature of these sites is that some of them yield evidence on fishing, both riverine and marine and the exploitation of other aquatic foods such as prawns, crabs, tortoises etc.

As we have seen in the earlier sections our understanding about Mesolithic stage is rich. The distribution of sites belonging to the hunting-gathering communities of this stage has been quite wide and a large number of these sites have also been investigated. The principal regional variants come from the Thar desert – Aravalli Hills area in north-west, and Gujarat – Central India, Ganga plain in Uttar Pradesh, and Karnataka and Tamil Nadu in peninsular India. We shall briefly discuss here the principal sites belonging to these regional variants.

Budha Pushkar and Bagor are two most important sites from the Rajasthan area. Budha Pushkar is a fresh water lake and has a unique distinction of supporting habitation beginning with the harbouring of a concentration of microlithic sites to the present day. Analysis of the finds indicates that the microlithic sites here were primarily living or camping sites. It also suggests an overlap with the subsequent semi-urban chalcolithic stage. Bagor site is to the east of the Aravalli hills situated on a dune

Rock painting from Jaora near Bhimbetka depicting a hunter with basket or carrying net filled with different animals from the forest and river
(After Neumayer 1983)

**Morhana Pahar, Central India: rock painting of chariot ambushed by men
on foot (After Bridget & Allchin, 1982)**

**Rock painting from Jaora near Bhimbetka depicting women engaged in
catching rats (After Neumayer 1983)**

on the bank of a seasonal tributary of Chambal. The key findings from this site are:

- 1 a distinctive microlithic factory;
- 1 human burials of the dead;
- 1 evidence of huts with paved floors;
- 1 evidence of domesticated sheep and goat, different species of deer, wild boar, jackal, rat, monitor lizard, river turtle and fish;
- 1 pottery and three copper arrow heads.

It is also suggested that over a period of time the hunting-gathering communities associated with this site shifted to crop based agriculture as their mode of living.

The Gujarat region site is at Langhnaj. It shows a cultural sequence similar to the Bagor site. The Central India sites are located on small hills and give evidence on the making of tools and implements and waste material left after finishing the tools. There are several larger sites which fit the size and features of factory sites. Perhaps these larger sites were serving the communities coming there from distant places.

The situation in the Ganga plain in Uttar Pradesh was different. An important site located at Sarai Nahar Rai appears to have been a site under occupation by communities that lived there permanently. It is suggested that such communities received their supplies of tools and implements from central India sites and had thus developed a pattern of relationships between two geographically different regions.

The peninsular sites in Raichur and Bellary districts of Karnataka yield interesting evidence. They seem to use raw material predominantly consisting of milky quartz. It is argued by Allchin that this was “in part due to the granite rocks underlying so much of the country, in which quartz veins and dykes are readily found. The jaspers and chalcedonies so common in the volcanic rocks farther north are in short supply, but they do occur in places and they are present in some river gravels. Both earlier and later peoples undoubtedly found these sources, but many of the southern microlithic assemblages are almost a hundred per cent quartz” (Bridget & Raymond Allchin, *op.cit*, p.86).

5.5 SUMMARY

The Pre-historic societies of hunter-gatherers are studied on the basis of archaeological remains with the help of anthropological theories. The Palaeolithic and Mesolithic ages represent the hunting-gathering stage of social evolution. The Palaeolithic Culture has three phases in terms of the nature of stone tools and changes in climate. The handaxes, cleavers, choppers and chopping tools are predominantly early Palaeolithic artifacts. The Middle Palaeolithic tools are mainly flakes. The Upper Palaeolithic Culture is characterized by burins and scrapers.

The Mesolithic age started around 8000 B.C. and the age is associated with changes in climatic conditions. There was further technological development reflected in the production of microliths and small stone tools. The Mesolithic tools are mainly the blade, core, point, triangle and lunate.

Faunal remains give us considerable idea about the subsistence pattern of palaeolithic and Mesolithic people. During the palaeolithic age people were primarily in the hunting and gathering stage. People seem to have hunted large and middle size mammals such as elephant, ox, nilgai, deer, wild boar and a variety of birds. At the same time they also exploited the plant foods like fruits, seeds etc. The hunting-gathering pattern continued during the Mesolithic age. Some animals like wild goat, fox etc. appeared during this time. From the Palaeolithic age to Mesolithic Age, there seems to have been a shift from big animal hunting to small animal hunting and fishing. The pre-historic paintings give us insight into the economic, social and cultural life of the people. By the time communities reached the peak stage of microlithic industry they developed their ecological knowledge base to make a transition from hunting-gathering mode to animal husbandry and settled agriculture, possible.

Budha Pushkar and Bagor are two most important sites from the Rajasthan area. Budha Pushkar is a fresh water lake and has a unique distinction of supporting habitation beginning with the harbouring of a concentration of microlithic sites to the present day. Analysis of the finds indicates that the microlithic sites here were primarily living or camping sites. It also suggests an overlap with the subsequent semi-urban chalcolithic stage. Bagor site is to the east of the Aravalli hills situated on a dune with changes in climatic conditions. There was further technological development reflected in the production of microliths and small stone tools. The Mesolithic tools are mainly the blade, core, point, triangle and lunate.

Faunal remains give us considerable idea about the subsistence pattern of palaeolithic and Mesolithic people. During the palaeolithic age people were primarily in the hunting and gathering stage. People seem to have hunted large and middle size mammals such as elephant, ox, nilgai, deer, wild boar and a variety of birds. At the same time they also exploited the plant foods like fruits, seeds etc. The hunting-gathering pattern continued during the Mesolithic age. Some animals like wild goat, fox etc. appeared during this time. From the Palaeolithic age to Mesolithic Age, there seems to have been a shift from big animal hunting to small animal hunting and fishing. The pre-historic paintings give us insight into the economic, social and cultural life of the people. By the time communities reached the peak stage of microlithic industry they developed their ecological knowledge base to make a transition from hunting-gathering mode to animal husbandry and settled agriculture, possible.

5.6 EXERCISES

- 1) Examine in detail the nature of evidence pertaining to hunting-gathering communities.
- 2) Carefully describe the geographical spread of hunting-gathering communities and the main stages of their expansion.
- 3) Write an essay on the characteristics of hunting-gathering communities and give an idea about any notable features found by you.
- 4) How do regional variations in the hunting-gathering sites relate with eco-environmental settings? Explain with the help of details provided in Section 5.4.

5.7 SUGGESTED READING

Bridget and Raymond Allchin, *The Rise of Civilization in India and Pakistan*, Great Britain, 1982.

V.N. Misra, 'Stone Age India: An Ecological Perspective' in *Man and Environment*, XIV(I), 1989, pp 17-64.

S. Settar, Ravi Korisettar ed. *Prehistory, Archaeology of South Asia*, Vol.I of *Indian Archaeology in Retrospect*, New Delhi, 2002.

Irfan Habib, *Prehistory*, in *People's History of India Series*, 1 New Delhi, 2001.