Class 9 Social Science Chapter 4: Early Humans and Beginning of Civilisation - Notes, Important Questions and MCQs (2026-27)

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These Class 9 Social Science Chapter 4 notes cover “Early Humans and Beginning of Civilisation” from the new NCERT textbook Understanding Society: India and Beyond (Part 1, 2026-27): why we study early human history, human ancestors and their spread from Africa, the Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic and Chalcolithic periods with Indian sites, and the Bronze Age civilisations of the Sindhu–Sarasvatī region, Mesopotamia, Egypt and China – with tables, Q&A, 10 MCQs and a free PDF.

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Chapter Overview

Early human history is the long period before writing was invented. It is studied through archaeological evidence such as stone tools, fossils, cave paintings and remains of settlements. Humans evolved in Africa and gradually spread across the world, including the Indian subcontinent, where sites like Attirampakkam (about 1.5–1.7 million years ago) and Isampur show very early human presence.

Over time people moved from hunting and gathering to farming and settled village life (the Neolithic Revolution), then to the use of copper and bronze. This led to Bronze Age civilisations with cities, trade, writing and administration – the Sindhu–Sarasvatī, Mesopotamian, Egyptian and Chinese civilisations – which grew independently in fertile river valleys.

Important Topics and Concepts

Studying Early Humans

- History before writing is reconstructed from tools, fossils, cave art and settlement remains.
- Hominins include modern humans and their extinct human-like ancestors.
- Humans evolved in Africa and migrated to Asia, Europe and beyond.
- In India, Attirampakkam (Tamil Nadu, ~1.5–1.7 million years) and Isampur (Karnataka, ~1.2 million years) have handaxes, cleavers and animal fossils.

Palaeolithic and Mesolithic Periods

- Palaeolithic (Old Stone Age): hunter-gatherers using handaxes, cleavers and scrapers; lived in caves and open camps; later blade and burin tools.
- Mesolithic (Middle Stone Age): tiny stone tools called microliths and bone points; temporary settlements near rivers and lakes.
- Bhimbetka (Madhya Pradesh), a World Heritage Site, has hundreds of painted rock shelters.
- Cave art shows hunting, animals and community life.

Neolithic Revolution and Chalcolithic Age

- Neolithic (New Stone Age): agriculture and domestication of animals; permanent villages; pottery, weaving and polished stone tools.
- Mehrgarh (Baluchistan) is among the earliest farming sites of the subcontinent; Burzahom (Kashmir) had pit dwellings.
- Regional variations existed across the subcontinent.
- Chalcolithic: use of copper with stone tools; growth of farming communities, leading towards cities.

Sindhu–Sarasvatī Civilisation

- Developed from early farming communities of Baluchistan and the Indus–Ghaggar region.
- Planned cities, drainage, standard weights, seals, crafts and long-distance trade.
- Early Harappans at Kalibangan ploughed fields in a criss-cross pattern – a farming tradition nearly 5,000 years old that continues today.
- Its script has not yet been deciphered.

Bronze Age Civilisations outside India

- Mesopotamia (Tigris–Euphrates, Fertile Crescent): city-states like Ur and Uruk; Sumerian, Akkadian, Assyrian and Babylonian phases; cuneiform script on clay tablets; ziggurat temples.
- Egypt (Nile): rulers called Pharaohs; pyramids; hieroglyphic script; papyrus records; calendar of three seasons of four months each based on the Nile’s flood.
- China (Huang He): Shang (1600–1046 BCE) and Zhou (1046–256 BCE) dynasties; bronze vessels, jade objects; officials chosen carefully; the Great Wall built later for defence.
- All grew independently in fertile river valleys and contributed to farming, writing, architecture and administration.

Comparing Early Civilisations

Most-asked table.

Civilisation	River	Script	Notable features
Sindhu–Sarasvatī	Indus, Ghaggar (Sarasvatī)	Undeciphered	Planned cities, drainage, seals
Mesopotamia	Tigris, Euphrates	Cuneiform	City-states, ziggurats
Egypt	Nile	Hieroglyphic	Pharaohs, pyramids, papyrus
China	Huang He (Yellow River)	Early Chinese characters	Shang and Zhou bronzes, jade

Periods of Early Human History

Period	Tools	Way of life	Indian example
Palaeolithic	Handaxes, cleavers, scrapers	Hunter-gatherers, caves	Attirampakkam, Isampur
Mesolithic	Microliths, bone points	Temporary camps near water	Bhimbetka
Neolithic	Polished stone tools, pottery	Farming, villages	Mehrgarh, Burzahom
Chalcolithic	Copper and stone	Farming communities	Early sites in Baluchistan

Important Definitions and Terms

Term	Meaning
Prehistory	Period before writing
Hominin	Modern humans and their extinct close relatives
Palaeolithic	Old Stone Age
Microliths	Very small stone tools of the Mesolithic
Neolithic Revolution	Shift to farming and settled life
Chalcolithic	Copper-stone age
Civilisation	Complex society with cities, writing and administration
City-state	Sovereign state centred on a city
Cuneiform	Wedge-shaped Mesopotamian script
Hieroglyphics	Picture-based Egyptian script

Short Answer Questions

Q1. How is early human history studied?

Through archaeological evidence like stone tools, fossils, cave art and settlement remains.

Q2. Name two early Palaeolithic sites in India.

Attirampakkam (Tamil Nadu) and Isampur (Karnataka).

Q3. What are microliths?

Q4. Why is Bhimbetka famous?

For hundreds of painted rock shelters showing prehistoric life; it is a World Heritage Site.

Q5. What was the Neolithic Revolution?

The shift from hunting-gathering to farming and settled village life.

Q6. What is unique about the Kalibangan fields?

They show criss-cross ploughing nearly 5,000 years old.

Q7. Name the script of Mesopotamia and Egypt.

Cuneiform (Mesopotamia) and hieroglyphics (Egypt).

Q8. Name two Bronze Age dynasties of China.

Shang and Zhou.

Long Answer Questions

Q1. Describe the main stages of the Stone Age.

Palaeolithic: hunter-gatherers with handaxes, cleavers, scrapers.

Mesolithic: microliths, temporary camps near water, cave art (Bhimbetka).

Neolithic: farming, domestication, pottery, permanent villages (Mehrgarh).

Chalcolithic: copper with stone tools, growing farming communities.

These changes paved the way for Bronze Age cities.

Q2. Why is the Neolithic period called a revolution?

People began growing crops and taming animals.

Food supply became more reliable.

Permanent villages grew; population increased.

New crafts – pottery, weaving, polished tools – developed.

It laid the foundation for later civilisations.

Q3. Compare the civilisations of Mesopotamia, Egypt and China.

All developed in fertile river valleys – Tigris–Euphrates, Nile, Huang He.

Mesopotamia had city-states, ziggurats and cuneiform.

Egypt had Pharaohs, pyramids, hieroglyphics and a Nile-based calendar.

China had Shang and Zhou dynasties, bronze and jade craft.

Each developed writing, administration and trade independently.

MCQs with Answers

1. Attirampakkam is in(a) Karnataka (b) Tamil Nadu (c) Madhya Pradesh (d) KashmirAnswer: (b) Tamil Nadu

2. Microliths belong to the(a) Palaeolithic (b) Mesolithic (c) Neolithic (d) Iron AgeAnswer: (b)

3. Bhimbetka rock shelters are in(a) Madhya Pradesh (b) Rajasthan (c) Gujarat (d) OdishaAnswer: (a) Madhya Pradesh

4. Farming began in the(a) Palaeolithic (b) Mesolithic (c) Neolithic (d) Bronze Age onlyAnswer: (c) Neolithic

5. Mehrgarh is an early(a) farming site (b) port (c) fort (d) templeAnswer: (a) farming site

6. Chalcolithic means use of(a) iron (b) copper with stone (c) bronze only (d) goldAnswer: (b) copper with stone

7. Cuneiform script belongs to(a) Egypt (b) China (c) Mesopotamia (d) HarappaAnswer: (c) Mesopotamia

8. Egyptian rulers were called(a) Kings (b) Pharaohs (c) Emperors (d) SultansAnswer: (b) Pharaohs

9. Shang dynasty ruled in(a) Egypt (b) China (c) Mesopotamia (d) IndiaAnswer: (b) China

10. Harappan script is(a) deciphered (b) undeciphered (c) cuneiform (d) BrahmiAnswer: (b) undeciphered

Quick Revision Points

- Prehistory studied from tools, fossils, art.
- Humans evolved in Africa; Indian sites Attirampakkam, Isampur.
- Palaeolithic → Mesolithic (Bhimbetka) → Neolithic (Mehrgarh) → Chalcolithic.
- Neolithic Revolution: farming, villages, pottery.
- Sindhu–Sarasvatī: planned cities, Kalibangan fields.
- Mesopotamia (cuneiform), Egypt (hieroglyphs), China (Shang, Zhou).

Chapter Summary

Early human history, before writing, is known from archaeological evidence. Humans evolved in Africa and spread worldwide; India has some of the oldest sites, such as Attirampakkam and Isampur. Life changed from Palaeolithic hunting-gathering to Mesolithic microlith-using communities and then to Neolithic farming villages and Chalcolithic copper use.

These changes led to Bronze Age civilisations with cities, trade and writing. The Sindhu–Sarasvatī civilisation grew from local farming communities, while Mesopotamia, Egypt and China developed independently along great rivers, each leaving lasting contributions in agriculture, writing, architecture and governance.

Exam Tips and PYQ Pattern

- Learn the Stone Age periods table with Indian sites.
- Compare civilisations in a table for long answers.
- Mark Bhimbetka, Mehrgarh, Attirampakkam on the map.
- Remember scripts: cuneiform, hieroglyphics, undeciphered Harappan.
- Explain why the Neolithic was a “revolution”.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is this chapter in the 2026-27 CBSE syllabus?

Yes. It is part of the new NCERT Class 9 Social Science textbook “Understanding Society: India and Beyond” (Part 1), prescribed for the 2026-27 session.

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What are the stages of the Stone Age?

Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic, followed by the Chalcolithic (copper-stone) age.

Which early civilisations are studied in this chapter?

The Sindhu–Sarasvatī, Mesopotamian, Egyptian and Chinese civilisations.

Conclusion

Early Humans and Beginning of Civilisation traces our journey from stone tools to cities. Learn the period and civilisation tables, practise the Q&A here and save the free PDF for revision.

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Author Bio: Written and reviewed by the Nextoper Editorial Team, a group of CBSE social science educators who build chapter notes directly from the NCERT textbook and past board paper patterns.

Freshness Note: These notes follow the NCERT Class 9 Social Science textbook, Understanding Society: India and Beyond (Parts 1 and 2, first edition 2026, NCF-SE 2023), and the CBSE syllabus for the 2026-27 session. Last checked on 23 November 2026.