1. How did humans start agriculture? In what ways did it affect the social structure?

Ans: During early ages, population was very less and groups of people use to move from one place to other place based on the availability of food grains/water/ comfortableness of the place. Before people were not practicing agriculture, they use to eat what ever was available, digestible in the nature. Probably, as they were moving all around the year for food, they might not have practiced agriculture and during those ages and as the population was very less, food available made by the nature was sufficient to them. Later……As the population has started increasing, food produced by nature was not sufficient for them. Quarrels between two groups used to happen for valuables(Food, Sex and comfort of land/ river/pond). Then they started owning lands not for agriculture but to protect and safeguard their group of people. During such scenario, when they started staying in one particular place, they got awareness about the yield/harvest from plants. Later they started doing agriculture to produce at their own instead of depending upon nature.

About 12,000 years ago, human communities started to function very differently than in the past. Rather than relying primarily on hunting or gathering food, many societies created systems for producing food. By about 10,000 BCE, humans began to establish agricultural villages.

This had massive ramifications on the social sphere, marking an important departure from past social systems; people lived in larger, denser, and more permanent settlements, and not everyone had to devote their full time to food production. Since there was no need for all residents to devote themselves full time to producing food, specialization within society was made possible. Thus, surplus food, food that did not go directly to farmers’ families, was distributed to members of the society.

Another notable effect of this new social order was the evolution of the idea of ownership; contrary to migrating hunter-gatherer bands, farmers invested a great deal of their time and energy in cultivating specific areas of land, and as such they were attached to them. As this likely lead to disputes, strong leaders and codes of conduct evolved in response.

The advent of agriculture did not happen simultaneously and completely everywhere in the world; some communities adopted farming earlier or more fully than others, and some did not adopt it at all. Despite this variability, however, farming undeniably revolutionized human history. Farming settlements spread rapidly all over the world; humans had foraged for over a million years, and yet, within the last 12,000 years, farming has replaced foraging almost entirely. Very few foraging-based systems survive to this day.

The surplus food that agricultural systems could generate allowed for people to live in larger, more permanent villages. Villages were more productive not only agriculturally but creatively. People produced textiles, pottery, buildings, tools, metal work, sculptures, and painting, which were both directly tied to agriculture and to settlement in bigger villages.

2. Give a detailed account of development of writing and method of communications in Bronze Age societies.

Ans: Writing emerged in many different cultures in the Bronze Age. Examples are the Cuneiform writing of the Sumerians, Egyptian hieroglyphs, Cretan hieroglyphs, Chinese logographs, and the Olmec script of Mesoamerica. The Chinese script likely developed independently of the Middle Eastern scripts, around 1600 BC. The pre-Columbian Mesoamerican writing systems (including Olmec and Maya scripts) are also generally believed to have had independent origins. It is thought that the first true alphabetic writing was developed around 2000 BC for Semitic workers in the Sinai by giving mostly Egyptian hieroglyphs semantic values (see History of the alphabet and Proto-Sinaitic alphabet). The Ge’ez writing system of Ethiopia is considered Semitic. It is likely to be of semi-independent origin, having roots in the Meroitic Sudanese ideogram system.

Most other alphabets in the world today either descended from this one innovation, many via the Phoenician alphabet, or were directly inspired by its design. In Italy, about 500 years passed from the early Old Italic alphabet to Plautus (750 to 250 BC), and in the case of the Germanic peoples, the corresponding time span is again similar, from the first Elder Futhark inscriptions to early texts like the Abrogans (ca. 500 to 750 CE).

Cuneiform script

The original Sumerian writing system derives from a system of clay tokens used to represent commodities. By the end of the 4th millennium BC, this had evolved into a method of keeping accounts, using a round-shaped stylus impressed into soft clay at different angles for recording numbers. This was gradually augmented with pictographs, writing using a sharp stylus to indicate what was being counted. Round-stylus and sharp-stylus writing were gradually replaced around 2700-2500 BC by writing using a wedge-shaped stylus (hence the term cuneiform), at first only for logograms, but later on to include phonetic elements by the 29th century BC. About 2600 BC cuneiform began to represent syllables of the Sumerian language. Finally, cuneiform writing became a general purpose writing system for logograms, syllables, and numbers.

The 26th century BC, this script was adapted to the Akkadian language, and from there to others such as Hurrian and Chaldean. It is similar in appearance to this writing system include those for Ugaritic and Old Persian.

Elamite script - The undeciphered Proto-Elamite script emerges from as early as 3200 BC. It is believed to have evolved into Linear Elamite by the later 3rd millennium, and then replaced by Elamite Cuneiform adopted from Akkadian.

Indus script

Sequence of ten Indus signs discovered near the northern gate of the Indus site Dholavira

The Middle Bronze Age Indus script which dates back to the early Harappan phase of around 3000 BC in ancient north western India and what is now Pakistan, has not yet been deciphered. It is unclear whether it should be considered an example of proto-writing, or if it is actual writing of the logographic-syllabic type of the other Bronze Age writing systems. Mortimer Wheeler recognises the style of writing asoustrophedon, where “this stability suggests a precarious maturity”.

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