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Q1(c)

South Indian Paleoliths

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2015 · Anthropology GS 2 · 10 marks · Evolution of the Indian Culture and Civilization

1.1 Evolution of the Indian Culture and Civilization-Prehistoric (Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic and Neolithic-Chalcolithic), Protohistoric (Indus Civilization). Pre-Harappan, Harappan and post-Harappan cultures. Contributions of the tribal cultures to Indian civilization.

Core demand of the question

- Write a note on South Indian Paleoliths
- Keep the note to a 10-mark length of about 150 words

Revision summary

South Indian palaeoliths centre on the Madras Acheulian of quartzite handaxes.

Footo found Pallavaram in 1863 and mapped Tamil laterite industries.

Attirampakkam gives a deep dated Acheulian sequence.

Sankalia set the peninsula beside Narmada and Deccan sequences.

The stack is local and long, not a Siwalik Soanian copy.

Introduction

South Indian palaeoliths are Lower and Middle Pleistocene stone industries of the peninsula, classically the Madras handaxe tradition. They show a long Acheulian occupation south of the Narmada.

Body**Type sites and tools**

- **Attirampakkam** on the Kortallayar, near Chennai, has a deep Acheulian sequence of handaxes, cleavers, and later flakes, dated far older than once taught.
- **Robert Bruce Footo** found the first Indian palaeolith at Pallavaram in 1863 and mapped the laterite and river-gravel industries of Tamil country.
- **H. D. Sankalia** placed these Madras industries in an all-India palaeolithic frame beside the Deccan and Narmada.

What they show

- Large bifaces on quartzite mark a South Indian Acheulian, not a copy of Siwalik Soanian pebble tools.
- Middle Palaeolithic flakes and later microliths overlie some of the same river systems, so the peninsula has a full stone-age stack.
- Coastal and inland gravels record hominin presence long before Harappa.

Flow diagram

Footte Pallavaram -> Attirampakkam Acheulian
Attirampakkam Acheulian -> Sankalia all-India frame
Attirampakkam Acheulian -> Middle Palaeolithic flakes

Conclusion

South Indian palaeoliths, from Footte's Pallavaram to **Attirampakkam**, establish a deep Acheulian south. They are a peninsula sequence, not a northern leftover.

Facts & figures

Robert Bruce Footte

Discovered the Pallavaram handaxe in 1863 and founded South Indian palaeolithic study.

Attirampakkam

Kortallayar site with a long Acheulian and later flake sequence.

Madras industry

Classic name for South Indian quartzite biface assemblages.

H. D. Sankalia

Integrated South Indian palaeoliths into a national prehistoric framework.

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