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Q2(b)

Give the distribution and characteristic features of Upper Paleolithic culture in India

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2021 · Anthropology GS 2 · 15 marks · Demographic profile of India

2. Demographic profile of India-Ethnic and linguistic elements in the Indian population and their distribution. Indian population-factors influencing its structure and growth.

Core demand of the question

- Outline the distribution and features of the Upper Palaeolithic in India
- Keep the answer to a 15-mark length of about 200 words

Revision summary

Upper Palaeolithic India is a late Pleistocene blade-burin horizon.

Bhimbetka, **Patne**, and Kurnool are the teaching distribution.

Features include blades, burins, bone points, and ostrich eggshell beads.

It is a technological grade, not one migrating race.

Coverage is patchy and some labels remain under revision.

Introduction

The Upper Palaeolithic in India is a late Pleistocene blade-and-burin industry with bone and ornament, not a carbon copy of the European Aurignacian. It is patchy, dated, and regional.

Body

Distribution

- **Central Indian sandstone:** **Bhimbetka** and nearby Vindhyan shelters with late blade tools under later Mesolithic and painting sequences.
- **Deccan and western uplands:** **Patne** in Maharashtra, with ostrich eggshell beads and a dated late Pleistocene industry.
- **Southern limestone:** **Kurnool** caves in Andhra, with blades and bone points in a cave fauna setting.
- Son and Belan valleys and sites such as Baghor add a north-central scatter. Coastal and far North-East coverage remains thinner in the published teaching set.

Features

- Punch-struck blades, burins, scrapers, and occasionally bone tools replace the heavier Middle Palaeolithic prepared-core look.
- Ostrich eggshell beads at **Patne** show ornament and long-distance shell, a behavioural marker of later Pleistocene people.
- Habitation is shelter, dune, and river terrace more than built village. Art at **Bhimbetka** is a long sequence; only some layers are claimed as Upper Palaeolithic.

- **M. L. K. Murty** and others stressed that India's Upper Palaeolithic is a technological grade, not a single migrating race.

Limit

- Dates and labels still shift. Some assemblages once called Upper Palaeolithic are now late Middle or early microlithic. Distribution is a working map, not a closed atlas.

Flow diagram

Upper Palaeolithic India -> Bhimbetka shelters
Upper Palaeolithic India -> Patne beads
Upper Palaeolithic India -> Kurnool caves
Upper Palaeolithic India -> Blades burins ornament

Conclusion

Indian Upper Palaeolithic is a blade-burin and ornament horizon at **Bhimbetka**, **Patne**, Kurnool, and related valleys. It is regional and incomplete, not a European stage imported whole.

Facts & figures

Bhimbetka

Vindhyan shelter complex with late Palaeolithic tools in a long occupation and painting sequence.

Patne

Maharashtra site known for Upper Palaeolithic industry and ostrich eggshell beads.

Kurnool caves

Andhra limestone caves with blades, bone tools, and Pleistocene fauna.

M. L. K. Murty

South Indian prehistorian who treated the Indian Upper Palaeolithic as a regional technological stage.