The history of Human habitation in India goes back to the early Pleistocene. Field researches in the last 150 years have very well documented that barring certain pockets of the country e.g., Indo-Gangetic Doab we have distribution of Stone Age sites or the evidence of early man across the country. Though concentration of sites is reported from the semi arid and from the peninsular region, the early dates are known from the Himalayan zone. It means that the early man flourished in diverse climatic zones, some of which are quite hostile now, as far as the climate or rain fall is concerned. Considering the number or frequency of sites we have the evidence to show that there was a gradual increase in the number throughout the Pleistocene phase or right from early Stone Age, however we see a boom in the number of sites during the Early Holocene throughout the country. From this phase we have hundreds of rock art sites, which not only reveal the use of microliths but also depict their life style on the wall of shelters. In fact no one can miss a few eye arresting scenes from Bhimbetka e.g., a family in hut, a hunter with his hunt, collection of honey, hunting in a group and hunting with mask and so on. We have hundreds of recorded sites in the country but only a very few ones have been subjected to systematic excavation.

In case of Stone Age there are a large number of issues yet to be addressed e.g., skeletal remains, dating, primary contexts, factory sites, adaptation, evolution of language(s), diverse technologies and so on. In the recent years there has been a paradigm shift in understanding of the Stone Age in India, but unfortunately only a very few scholars are active in the field. As far as origin of language is concerned most of the scholars believe that it had evolved right in the early Stone Age.

Following the Stone Age, the first farmers or popularly known as the Neolithic culture(s) inhabited certain pockets of the country like peninsular India, North Eastern Area, Kashmir and so on. The Neolithic folks were the first farmers of respective regions. We have yet to answer some important questions like: was it a diffusion of various knowledge systems e.g., pottery making, domestication and agriculture or independent centers evolved in the early Holocene? Why do we not find Neolithic culture in all the regions of the country. How expansion of agriculture took place in different climatic zones of the country.
On the other hand a major part of Northern India, including northern Deccan, was occupied by the Bronze Age folks such as Ahar, Ganeshwar, Kaytha, Malwa, Jorwe and so on. In fact like Neolithic folks they were also the first farmers of certain areas like Rajasthan, northern Gujarat and Deccan. These rural Bronze Age folks or popularly known as Chalcolithic cultures were responsible for food surplus, innovation of long distance trade and number of crafts and technologies, which eventually contributed to the urbanization of the Harappans. A few regional centers like Gilund, Diamabad, Inamgaon, Navdatoli, Ganeshwar and so on have also been identified. We do not know why these chalcolithic people disappeared from the scene? The settlement studies carried out so far indicate that these cultures generally flourished in the river valleys or in the undulating topography having water sluice. But in a recent survey an Ahar settlement has been discovered from high hillock which indicates that we yet to discover many more settlements. The most important achievement(s) of the chalcolithic cultures was discovery of metal (copper, silver, gold, lead) and public architecture like fortified enclosure. It is a challenging issue to understand history of varied techniques across these rural folks? Also we do not know why they did not urbanise.

The mighty Harappans flourished in a major part of north Western India including Pakistan and parts of Afghanistan. They were perhaps being controlled by some of their big cities like Harappa, Mohenjodaro, Dholavira, Rakhigarhi, Kalibangan and so on. Of course there has been a phenomenal change in the understanding of the Harappans due to studies carried out in the last two decades, but there are a large number of issues yet to be addressed e.g., decipherment of the script, state society or not, regional identity, terminologies, decline etc. Out of nearly 1500 Harappan sites hardly fifty have been undertaken for systematic excavation.

The second half of the first millennium BCE or the second urbanization was perhaps very important phase of Indian history as various important contributions to the world of science were made e.g., glass making, retorts, high carbon steel, materia medica, distillation, high quality textile etc. It seems that this traditional knowledge system or tradition of science and technology was inbuilt in the Indian society for last five thousand years and continued until the 18th century when the British sway to the power. It seems that it is very important to understand why have we lost such important aspect of heritage?

It appears that most of the traditional crafts and technologies, vernacular architecture, peasant’s science is the legacy of the Harappans and Bronze Age people to our society. We can trace the history of civil engineering, textile, underground mining of water and metal, archaeometallurgy, fort or defence building, ship building, gold soldering, lapidary, cereal storage, varied colour making and so on back to the Bronze Age. In fact not only each Bronze Age culture but also an individual site belonging to any culture had its identity. There will be no surprise if we discover the beginning of Ayurveda right in the Pre urban or Early Harappan phase.

The Aravallis are not only rich in archaeological record but also in archival record, folklore and traditional knowledge system. In fact considerable work has been done in order to survey archival record for the history of Western India, but nothing has been done to tap the information regarding development of science and technology. It is interesting to mention here that Rajasthan has a very old tradition of genealogy writing. Each community has a bhaat who prepares genealogy of each family. On
the other hand traditional crafts and folklore is also very rich, which needs to be documented for benefit of future generations.

We are proposing the seminar to celebrate platinum jubilee of our institute. It is therefore we will also like to review the contribution made by the faculty in the last seven decades. In the early decades a large number of scholars also immensely contributed by working on folk lore, editing manuscripts and collection of very large number of historical records. This work will be also be highlighted during the conference.

We therefore plan to conduct a national seminar to address the following themes:

1. Recent development in the history of Stone Age and Bronze Age research
2. Different centers of domestication, agriculture, pottery,
3. Origin and history of languages and scripts
4. The Harappans and their legacy
5. The Rural Bronze Age cultures and their contributions
6. History of traditional knowledge, science and technology
7. Traditional art and crafts
8. Rescue of ancient sites, protection, conservation, documentation
9. Recently excavated archaeological sites in Rajasthan: Chandravati, Pachchmta and others

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