

Unit - 11 : Field Archaeology (Methods of data recovery) methods and Techniques in Archaeological exploration.

Ans: → Prehistory, which is concerned with the study of the dark period of man, is often compared with the ~~study~~ night, while prehistory is compared with the early morning, when written record was known but not perfectly. Prehistory mainly aims to reconstruct the life ways of ~~the past~~ ~~form of the~~ human society with the help of their material remains in the form of tools and weapons, pottery and other non-artificial evidences as well as the non-material elements.

In brief, prehistory aims at recovering as much as possible about the history of pre-literate societies. It was in 1836 that the history of prehistory researches and antiquity of man have taken an interesting turn, when the French Customs officer, Boucher-de-Perthes discovered in Somme valley during his survey, fossils bones of the extinct animals along with the Stone Tools. The development in the history of prehistory has taken place when C.J. Thomsen, in 1836 developed the concept of three ages first conceived by Vedel-Simonsen in 1813, and classified his collections in the

been growth during

the museum into three technological stages namely Stone Age, Bronze Age, and Iron Age.

To achieve the aims and objects of the study and to draw a meaningful picture of different aspects of the life and culture of the past communities, the prehistoric anthropologists generally employed the following archaeological and non-archaeological methods.

The different methods employed to recover the material remains left by the human societies and their analysis and interpretation consist of. —

- ① Survey or surface exploration.
 - ② excavation
 - ③ Analysis
 - ④ Interpretation and report writing.
- ① Survey of Surface Exploration

This is the first step in the discovery of sites which is undertaken keeping in view the aims and objectives of the problem of study and the hypothesis to be tested.

This involves the geographical area and nature of survey in accordance with the type of data one wants which may range from imparting practical field training to beginning in students in the subject specific.

Systematic search for sites is accomplished by exploration of the selected area of study by foot and careful observation of the surface of the terrain in question, supplemented by other methods like jeep or horse, aerial photography, electrical prospecting etc. To test and judge the contents of the site, including the structural features, proton magnetometer and electrical devices are employed to know the archaeological features.

② Excavation

Excavation of a site is undertaken in order to answer certain specific questions although it is generally helpful to work out the stratigraphy sequence of culture for a particular area besides confirming the surface finds. It is not possible to excavate all the sites discovered by surface exploration. A site is selected for excavation taking the various factors such as its archaeological richness,

undisturbed nature, nearness to the road, time, money, sources of equipment, permission besides the staff including labourers.

The main aim of the excavation is to discern the sequence of cultures and to draw a picture of the life of the people with the help of different types of material, evidence recovered from the excavation. The area selected for digging, the techniques employed and the type of excavation depend on the availability of resources and the objectives.

There are two different kinds of excavation depending on the size of the area to be dug; horizontal excavation and vertical excavation. In the horizontal excavation, the surface of the site is excavated in such a way that the area is cut down by the layers. This type of excavation is applied to explore larger area and conducted on a large scale expose details of the buildings structures as completely as possible. The next aspect of the excavation concerns the stratigraphy itself. The ~~to~~ three elements

of space, time and culture which constitute the context. The proof of and testimony to excavation and excavated sites lie in the preparation and preservation of records. Apart from mapping all excavated sites, a plan of the site before and during excavations has to be prepared with the help of compass, tape and hand level as also with surveying equipment.

8. Analysis

This involves the classification and description of artifactual - non-artifactual and other kinds of data. Classification into meaningful categories is made with regard to animal bones, tools, houses as also sites on the basis of which comparisons can be made and chronologists and cultural relationships can be established. Classification is the key typology. Typological classification is made of stone, bone or metal tools based on the presumed functions.

Since the artifacts have been artificially produced by the human beings in the distant past, it is always good to identify the idea with which maker wanted to produce the tools. The next part of analysis is description of artifacts without which the classification never be complete.

Besides the above analysis, the prehistoric anthropologists depends for his interpretations of human cultures on the technical analysis of pottery, metal and stone, weaving, soil, analysis of plants and animals, chemical residues and the sites themselves.

4. Interpretation and Report Writing:

The field objectives, the systematically recovered and identified, recorded and preserved as also restored prehistoric artifacts and non-artifactual evidences such as artifacts, burials, shelters etc. are interpreted with special reference to different types of cultural elements and their diffusion in time and space to delineate to the community.

Most of the prehistoric man's evidence revolves round the interpretation of the life ways of the people based on subsistence pattern and economy. Prehistoric economy is a multifaceted one ranging from

hunting, fishing and food collection, farming, harvesting and preparation of food. Besides the typological classification of different types of prehistoric objects must know the function to which they were used to understand life activities of the people. The next aspect of interpretation is the prehistoric society which consists of social organisation, demography, prehistoric culture, religion, specialisation etc.

Interpretation of the evidence is followed by report writing which varies from site reports to regional culture histories to draw a generalised picture.