



Class 9 Social Science – Chapter 4

NCERT Textbook Solutions – Early Humans and Beginning of Civilisation

Book: *Understanding Society: India and Beyond*

Class: 9 | **Session:** 2026–27

These solutions are based on the **new 2026–27 textbook Chapter 4**, not the old Class 9 History syllabus. The chapter is “**Early Humans and Beginning of Civilisation**” and covers early human history, the Stone Age, the Neolithic Revolution, the Sindhu–Sarasvatī civilisation, and the Bronze Age civilisations of Mesopotamia, Egypt and China.

Questions and Activities

Q1. Do you think life became easier or more challenging after humans started farming? Give two reasons for your answer.

Answer:

Life became **both easier and more challenging** after humans started farming.

Reasons:

1. **Food became more secure:** Farming and domestication of animals allowed people to produce their own food instead of depending entirely on hunting and gathering.
2. **Permanent settlements developed:** Agriculture encouraged people to settle in villages, build houses, make pottery and store food.

However, farming also brought new challenges such as the need for continuous labour, protection of crops and dependence on successful harvests.

The Neolithic Revolution involved the domestication of plants and animals, food production, pottery and the establishment of the first village settlements.

Q2. The environment offers human societies both opportunities as well as challenges. Explain with reference to early farming communities and river-valley civilisations.

Answer:

The environment provided both **opportunities and challenges** to early human societies.

Opportunities:

- Fertile river valleys provided suitable land for agriculture.
- Rivers supplied water for drinking and irrigation.
- Floods deposited fertile soil in some regions.
- Natural resources supported farming, crafts and trade.
- Rivers also helped settlements develop into larger communities and civilisations.

For example, the Nile flooded every summer and deposited rich mud called **kemet**, which was highly useful for agriculture. Egyptians also developed irrigation by diverting Nile water into fields and reservoirs.

Challenges:

- Floods could destroy crops and settlements.
- Managing river water required collective labour.
- Communities had to develop systems of irrigation, storage and administration.
- Environmental degradation and pressure on agricultural land could weaken societies.

Thus, early societies learned to **adapt to their environment and use natural resources effectively**.

Q3. Why do historians divide early human history into different ages such as Stone Age, Bronze Age, and Iron Age? What does this classification tell us about human progress?

Answer:

Historians divide early human history into different ages mainly according to **major technological developments and changes in human lifestyles**.

For example:

- **Stone Age:** Widespread use of stone tools.
- **Bronze Age:** Development and use of bronze metallurgy, along with the growth of towns and civilisations.
- **Iron Age:** Widespread use of iron, resulting in stronger tools and weapons and more advanced societies.

The textbook also identifies the **Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic and Chalcolithic** periods.

This classification helps historians understand how humans gradually developed:

better tools → food production → permanent settlements → metallurgy → towns → writing → organised societies and civilisations.

Q4. Imagine you are a Neolithic farmer. Describe one day of your life. What challenges would you face that a hunter-gatherer would not?

Answer:

If I were a Neolithic farmer, my day would begin early in the morning. I would check my crops, water the fields and take care of domesticated animals. I would also help my family prepare food, make or repair tools and store agricultural produce.

Unlike a hunter-gatherer, I would have to deal with several additional challenges:

- Protecting crops from animals and pests.
- Ensuring sufficient water for crops.
- Working regularly in the fields.
- Caring for domesticated animals.
- Storing food for future use.
- Dealing with crop failure due to drought, floods or other environmental problems.

The Neolithic way of life involved food production, domestication of animals and plants, pottery and permanent village settlements.

Q5. Imagine that the Harappan script gets deciphered tomorrow. What new types of information do you think historians might learn?

Answer:

If the **Harappan script** were deciphered, historians could learn much more about the Sindhu–Sarasvatī civilisation.

They might discover information about:

-  rulers and political organisation
-  administration
-  agriculture and crops
-  trade and merchants
-  laws and rules
-  religious beliefs
-  social organisation
-  cities and settlements
-  the purpose of seals and inscriptions
-  contacts with other civilisations

At present, the Harappan script has **not yet been deciphered**, so much of our understanding of the civilisation comes from archaeological evidence such as settlements, tools, pottery, seals and other objects.

Q6. Prepare a table with three columns—Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, and Neolithic—and fill in their distinctive features: tools, settlements, art, and subsistence.

Answer:

Feature	Palaeolithic	Mesolithic	Neolithic
Meaning	Old Stone Age	Transitional period	New Stone Age
Tools	Handaxes, cleavers, scrapers, choppers; later blades and microblades	Microlithic tools and bone points	Polished stone tools and tools for food production
Settlements	Caves and open camps	Temporary settlements, caves and rock shelters	Permanent village settlements
Art	Cave and rock paintings; symbolic communication; beads	Rock art flourished, including at Bhimbetka	Pottery and craft traditions developed
Subsistence	Hunting and gathering	Hunting, gathering, fishing and collecting wild resources	Agriculture, animal domestication and food production

The textbook describes the Palaeolithic as a hunting-gathering period, the Mesolithic as a transitional phase associated with microlithic tools, and the Neolithic with agriculture, domestication and permanent settlements.

Q7. “Bronze Age civilisations developed independently but shared common features.” Examine this statement with reference to the civilisations given in the chapter.

Answer:

The major Bronze Age civilisations discussed in the chapter were:

- **Sindhu–Sarasvatī civilisation**
- **Mesopotamian civilisation**
- **Egyptian civilisation**
- **Chinese civilisation**

They developed in different regions, largely around fertile river valleys, but shared several important features.

Common features:

1. **River-based agriculture** – Rivers provided water and fertile land.
2. **Agricultural surplus** – Increased agricultural productivity supported population growth.
3. **Urban centres** – Large settlements and cities emerged.
4. **Craft production** – Pottery, metalwork and other specialised crafts developed.
5. **Trade** – Communities exchanged goods and raw materials.
6. **Writing systems** – Writing developed for recording social and economic activities.
7. **Administration** – Organised systems of government developed.
8. **Social hierarchy** – Societies became increasingly stratified.

The textbook specifically identifies the four major civilisations as developing in fertile river plains and notes their contributions to agriculture, writing, architecture, administration and culture.

Q8. Although rivers provided many benefits, they also created challenges for

early societies. Discuss both the advantages and disadvantages of settling near rivers.

Answer:

 Advantages of rivers:

- Provided water for drinking.
- Supported agriculture and irrigation.
- Made fertile land available for farming.
- Supported livestock.
- Helped communities produce food surpluses.
- Encouraged trade and transport.
- Supported the growth of towns and cities.

For example, the Nile's annual flooding deposited fertile soil and supported Egyptian agriculture.

 Disadvantages:

- Floods could destroy crops and settlements.
- Water management required considerable labour.
- Communities had to construct canals, dams and reservoirs.
- Changes in rivers or water availability could threaten agriculture.

Thus, rivers were **essential for the growth of civilisations but also required careful management.**

Q9. With the help of your teacher, find out more about the Code of Hammurabi. Why was it important? Do you think it was fair to all sections of society? Give reasons for your answer.

Answer:

The **Code of Hammurabi** was a collection of rules and regulations for civil and social conduct compiled during the reign of **Hammurabi**, the Babylonian ruler.

Hammurabi came to power in **1792 BCE** and expanded Babylonia into a large empire. His code became an important historical example of an organised legal system.

Why was it important?

- It established rules for civil and social conduct.
- It helped regulate behaviour within the empire.
- It provides historians with information about Babylonian society.
- It became a foundational model for later legal systems.

Was it fair to everyone?

It can be argued that the code **was not completely equal for all sections of society**, because ancient societies were socially hierarchical. Different social groups could be treated differently under laws.

Therefore, although the Code of Hammurabi was important in the development of organised legal systems, it should be understood within the social structure of its time.

Q10. If you had to choose one major innovation from early civilisations that changed the world permanently, what would it be and why?

Answer:

I would choose **writing** as the major innovation.

Writing permanently changed human society because it allowed people to:

- Record information.
- Maintain accounts and economic transactions.
- Preserve laws and administrative records.

- Communicate information across generations.
- Record literature, stories and religious ideas.
- Develop more organised administration.

The Sumerians developed **cuneiform**, one of the earliest known writing systems, around **3200 BCE**. Their clay tablets recorded economic activities, laws, myths, hymns and other information.

Q11. Compare the social hierarchy and daily life of people in the Egyptian civilisation with those in Mesopotamia or China. What similarities and differences do you notice?

Answer:

Egypt

The Egyptian social hierarchy included:

1. **Pharaoh**
2. **Government officials, nobles and priests**
3. **Free landholders, artisans and merchants**
4. **Serfs and slaves**

The textbook presents this hierarchy in its social hierarchy pyramid.

Mesopotamia

Mesopotamian society also had a clear hierarchy. Kings and ruling groups lived in grand palaces, while farmers, craftspeople, merchants and traders formed other sections of society. Temples and their officials played an important role in economic and social life.

Similarities

- Both societies had rulers and powerful elites.
- Priests had important positions.
- Farmers formed an important part of the population.

- Artisans and merchants had specialised occupations.
- Society was socially hierarchical.
- Agriculture was central to daily life.

Differences

Egyptian society was strongly connected with the **Pharaoh and Nile-based agriculture**, while Mesopotamian city-states had powerful **temple authorities and city-based political systems**.

Q12. Activity: Using maps, locate the major rivers and civilisations of Mesopotamia, Egypt, China, and the Sindhu–Sarasvatī Valley. Mark the trade links between them.

Answer:

The major river-civilisation connections are:

Civilisation	Major River/Rivers	Region
Sindhu–Sarasvatī	Sindhu and Sarasvatī/Ghaggar-Sarasvatī system	Indian subcontinent
Mesopotamian	Tigris and Euphrates	West Asia
Egyptian	Nile	Egypt
Chinese	Huang He and Yangtze	China

The textbook explains that these major civilisations emerged in fertile river plains. It also notes especially strong contacts and trade between **Mesopotamia and the Sindhu–Sarasvatī civilisation**.

Mesopotamian records refer to trade with **Meluhha**, generally identified with the Sindhu–Sarasvatī civilisation, involving goods such as semi-precious stone beads, ivory, timber, gold dust and probably copper.

 **For the map:**

Mark:

Tigris + Euphrates → Mesopotamia

Nile → Egypt

Huang He + Yangtze → China

Sindhu + Sarasvatī/Ghaggar-Sarasvatī → Sindhu–Sarasvatī civilisation

Then draw the major trade connection between **Mesopotamia ↔ Sindhu–Sarasvatī**.

Q13. Activity: Choose one early civilisation and prepare a mini-scrapbook or presentation showing its innovations in tools, writing, art, and architecture.

Answer – Example: Mesopotamian Civilisation

A scrapbook/presentation on Mesopotamia can include:

Tools and Technology

- Copper tools
- Irrigation systems
- Dams and canals
- Wheeled carts
- Sailboats

The Sumerians developed canal irrigation and used mud and burnt bricks in construction. They also invented the wheeled cart and sailboat.

Writing

Cuneiform was developed by the Sumerians around **3200 BCE**. It was written by pressing a wedge-shaped stylus into soft clay tablets.

Art and Culture

Mesopotamian tablets recorded myths, hymns, laws and other literary works. The **Epic of Gilgamesh** is one of the earliest known written stories.

Architecture

The **ziggurat** was a large stepped, pyramid-shaped temple associated with the chief god of a Sumerian city.

★ **Important Chapter 4 Revision Notes**

Early Humans

- Early humans evolved in **Africa**.
- **Homo erectus** was among the earliest hominins to migrate out of Africa.
- **Homo sapiens** evolved in Africa around **300,000 years ago**.
- Archaeologists study tools, fossils and other remains to reconstruct early human history.

Main Periods

Palaeolithic → Mesolithic → Neolithic → Chalcolithic → Bronze Age → Iron Age

Palaeolithic

Hunter-gatherers and stone tools.

Mesolithic

Microlithic tools and transitional hunter-gatherer communities.

Neolithic

Agriculture, animal domestication and permanent settlements.

Chalcolithic

Copper used along with stone tools.

Bronze Age

Bronze metallurgy, towns, trade and early civilisations.

Iron Age

Widespread iron technology and more advanced societies.

Important Indian Subcontinent Sites

Mehrgarh

- Located in present-day Pakistan.
- Earliest Neolithic site in the north-western subcontinent.
- Dates to about **7000 BCE**.
- Agriculture, animal husbandry, houses and granaries developed here.
- Wheat and barley were cultivated.
- Sheep, goats and Indian cattle were raised.
- Copper objects appeared later.

Sindhu–Sarasvatī Civilisation

The Early Harappan phase developed into the mature civilisation, with urban centres emerging around **2600 BCE**. Important developments included pottery, copper working, seals, beads, standard weights and writing.

Four Major Bronze Age Civilisations

Civilisation	Main River/Region	Major Features
Sindhu–Sarasvatī	Sindhu and Sarasvatī/Ghaggar-Sarasvatī	Planned settlements, water management, crafts, weights, seals
Mesopotamia	Tigris & Euphrates	City-states, irrigation, cuneiform, ziggurats
Egypt	Nile	Pharaohs, pyramids, papyrus, hieroglyphic writing
China	Huang He & Yangtze	Bronze technology, dynasties, jade, silk, early writing

The textbook identifies these as major early civilisations that developed in fertile river plains and independently developed agriculture, urban centres, administration, writing and specialised crafts.

Chapter 4 in One Line

Early humans evolved in Africa → developed tools → migrated → became hunter-gatherers → adopted agriculture → formed permanent settlements → developed metallurgy → built towns and cities → developed writing and organised civilisations.

The chapter's own summary follows this broad progression from early humans and stone tools through agriculture and domestication to Bronze Age civilisations such as **Sindhu–Sarasvatī, Mesopotamia, Egypt and China.**