Proto History

The reasons for his remark are, while the Pre-history of Western Asiatic countries like Mesopotamia, Egypt etc. ended immediately after 3000 B.C. when records of dynasties, King-lists came to be written which can be interpreted to form the outline of a fairly reliable chronology in terms of years before the Christian era while in India although writing was known in the third millennium B.C. as is evident from the seals of Harappan civilization, these have not yet been deciphered to help us in preparing an outline of a reliable chronology in terms of years.

In India Proto-History spans the period around from 3000 B.C. to 600 B.C. covering the Bronze Age and Chalcolithic culture from the beginning of Harappan civilization up to the beginning of the historical period in 6th century B.C. which is the period of Buddha and Mahavira.

The sites having the archaeological remains of Harappans, Ochre colour Pottery (OCP), Painted Grey Ware (PGW) and Chalcolithic culture, are included in proto-historic period and they are called proto-historic settlements.

But, it is not applicable to whole period which falls between Pre-History and Historic phase in India, like Painted Gray Ware Phase, OCP, and Chalcolithic cultures don’t have the written record.

M.K. Dhavlikar suggests that literary evidence is available but there is no archaeological evidence to corroborate it, for instance the evidence of the Vedic literature.

Proto-Historical period is designated as the starting of the use of metal by human with the continuity of lithic-industry, to the beginning of understandable written recoded.

It can be divided into three categories on the basis of metallurgical development firstly Chalcolithic phase, secondly Bronze Age and finally Iron Age.

In this context duration of period which is tied around 7000 B.C. to 600 B.C. in India should be considered in proto-historic period.

The term ‘la Protohistorique,’ was first coined by the French, to refer to a period transposed between prehistory and true historical Period.

Proto-History refers to a period between pre-history and history.

It is generally understood that Proto-History is the period when the knowledge of writing was there but we are unable to read it.

Stuart Piggott (1950) suggested that the distinction between history and pre-history in India is a peculiarly elusive one.
The Vedic literature was in an oral state up to the 4th century AD or so, its antiquity goes back to the second millennium B.C.

And it is an important source for reconstructing our early social, political, religious and literary history.

This is a unique feature in world’s history.

Hence, this period should be legitimately included in as Protohistory.

Moreover, contemporary with much of the Vedic literature there is evidence from all over India about the early metal-using communities.

However, this is certainly prehistory in one sense, because there is no trace of writing in any case but since this period also runs parallel with the Vedic literature, it has been included under Protohistory.

According Sankalia, Protohistory defined the period between prehistoric stage and the historical stage covering archaeological record of post-Mesolithic and pre-Mauryan cultures, between 3500 or 3000 B.C and 300 BC.

Scope of Protohistory

Social Life

Economic Life

• Agriculture
• Animal Husbandry
• Industry
• Trade

Administration

Religion

Art and Architecture

Importance of Protohistory

- The use of burnt-brick in the construction of houses and drains.
- Planned City- Grid Pattern and drainage system
- Use of metals like, gold, silver, lead, copper, bronze
- Casting of bronze statues- LOST WAX TECHNIQUE
- Commercial contacts with Middle East countries
- Advance Technologies used:
  • Agriculture- Surplus production and Verities of cereals
  • Use of wheel-cart for transportation
  • Production of Cotton and use of cotton textile
  • Use of Well
• Knowledge of **Seasons and Calendar**
• Knowledge of **Celestial Objects** - sun, moon, stars
• Knowledge of **Arithmetic and Geometry**
• Knowledge of **Binary system** (weights) and **Decimal system**
• Use of **Scale** for measurement in length
• Knowledge of **Metallurgy**
• Art of **Bead** making and **Ornaments**
• **Alchemy and Chemistry**
• **Medical science**