

Book Review

PALAEOLITHIC TOOLS AND MANUFACTURES OF THE OLD WORLD

Author: Dipak Mukherji, Publisher: New Boipatra. Kolkata, India. Year: 2024. Page:155, ISBN 978-81-975500-5-8. Price- Rs.500

Palaeolithic Tools and Manufactures of the Old World, written by Dipak Mukherji, is an excellently executed, simplified book for undergraduates, postgraduates with an interest in anthropology, prehistory, or archaeology subjects past of *Homo Sapiens* cultural and biological evolution in the process of time. The author did excellent research on his data collection/information for this book before publishing. In this book, the author tried to provide an easy way of understanding our prehistoric past. This book presents a deep overview of prehistoric events, which helps to understand and sequence the evolutionary is book, the author puts information with minute details, keeping in mind that the read is helpful and understandable to undergraduates in terms of their official syllabus as much as possible. This book also shows the pure intention of being created for the readers who don't get the context of prehistory and its significance in understanding the human past and also to clear the confusion in understanding basic prehistoric events. The author wrote this book focusing on the unwritten past, meaning a time before written history, referred to as 'PREHISTORY', which is also told in this book as separate chapters explaining the palaeoenvironment and geological time period in which human evolution took place. It is presented in this book as the author himself is involved in the subject of Anthropology. The author has studied

anthropology for more than 60 years as a student, teacher, as well as an author. He himself wrote this book centralizing a long-term question within himself, i.e. "*Why at all, Homo Sapiens, as a biological species, amidst millions of others, had to be a tool user and also maker for its sheer survival*". To satiate his query, the author concentrates on explaining "Why" by first defining the *Homo Sapiens*, here author mentions negative as well as positive characteristics regarding *Homo Sapiens*, which, as per the author, are all true to themselves. Here, the author also tried to explain why our species, with its position in the ecological network or tropic structure, is becoming more vulnerable and endangered day by day by briefing the notion of evolution from the primates and *Homo sapiens'* arboreal legacy of attaining bipedalism, which is out-casting humans from claiming a position under forest ecology like the other primates. Secondly, the author also focused on framing the understanding of tool technology and its advancement used by our ancestors in the process of evolution. The author explains the tool dynamics from simple to advanced level here by presenting illustrations of different artifacts made or used by prehistoric people, but at the same time author is making a statement that this using or creating process of tools is not the biological inheritance of *Homo sapiens*, rather these are achieved or acquired by the terms of tackling or surviving in an extremely dangerous or harsh environment (basically instinctive need to survive). The author of this book also opined a very important theory regarding tool-making and its terminology, for him, the term "Tool" does not bear a satisfactory

definition for explaining the process of designing the artifacts for a particular or multipurpose use by prehistoric people. So, there should be an entirely different term and its definition for explaining the designing and making of artifacts through using “**Hands**” by prehistoric people, which is, as the author argued in his book, the term should be “**Manufacts**” referring to “Something made by hand” a combination of ‘manuscript’ and ‘manufacture’ and not the term tools should be used for artifacts made by prehistoric people. Thirdly, here, the author explained very well the palaeoanthropological sequence of fossil evidence discovery with its absolute and relative dating as they are found in different places in the world. The context of evolution from the genus *Australopithecus* to the genus *Homo* is explained very well and with concrete information on fossil evidence and its minute details, like the name of the founders, places, dates, fossil details and discussion, etc., which are really helpful for MCQ questions or general knowledge for competitive exams for the students of undergrads. One more thing is the author’s point of view on his outstanding experience and understanding of Olduvai Gorge and its importance in terms of the evolution of the genus *Homo*, and the beautiful tribute to the Leaky family by sharing the stories of discovering the fossils. Fourthly, apart from this, the author also tried to show a heartfelt discussion and tool experiment with his grandson regarding tools and prehistoric

people, pointing to his grandson’s curiosity about the prehistoric lifestyle. However, the most interesting part of the book for me is explaining the artifacts typology and its features, its making process and usefulness in different situations and from different places, which is simple in context, precise, not very lengthy explanations but illustrated very well, so one can understand the basic idea of tool typology and technology with a quick view of it. Lastly, at the end, which is very useful for the undergrads audiences, is the lab work, i.e., the format for drawing tools like different concepts, aspects, profiling, features, and identification of tools with proper examples. Above all, it’s a good book for basic understanding for undergraduates, post-graduates, for XI and XII standards and also for competitive exams like UGC NET, SET. But honestly, it is not so much needed for research purposes, although, for basic understanding, it is good, but not above graduation as research-oriented contents are very few or missing and very less helpful for Ph.D. candidates. Overall, it is an excellent outcome and it is a good to buy for the library for reference.

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