

HIS6E01-PRINCIPLES AND METHODS OF ARCHAEOLOGY -  
ELECTIVE COURSE

MODULE-1

TOPIC- HASMUKHLAL DHIRAJLAL SANKHALIA

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- ◉ Sankalia was born in Bombay on the 10th December 1908 in a middle-class Gujarati Bania family
- ◉ The love for stories from the two great Indian Epics and Puranas fostered in him by his parents and a chance reading in 1924 of Bal Gangadhar Tilak's book on *The Arctic Home in the Vedas* fired his curiosity to know more about the Aryans and, as the subsequent decades unfolded, the whole vista of Indian culture and history down to the present.
- ◉ As advised by his teacher, the well-known Indologist Father Heras, Sankalia wrote a thesis on the ancient Buddhist University at Nalanda in Bihar as part of his M. A examination of Bombay University
- ◉ During the preparation of this thesis he not only got an opportunity to familiarize himself with ancient Indian art, architecture and iconography but was also able to visit Nalanda and other ancient sites in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh

- ◉ Although he himself had never visualized the possibility of going out of the country for higher studies, at the behest of Father Heras again Sankalia went to England in 1934 to undertake doctoral research under the guidance of K. de B. Codrington.
- ◉ In the University of London he attended lectures in Indian studies conducted by F. J. Richards and also benefited from courses on Egyptian and Mesopotamian civilizations.
- ◉ The thesis itself, which he successfully completed in 1936, concerned a dynastic study of ancient monuments of Gujarat and entailed the use of data both from inscriptions and other such written sources and from two seasons of field survey of the monuments themselves.
- ◉ The second big gain that accrued from his sojourn to England was the training he received in field archaeology under Mortimer Wheeler by participating in his excavations at the famous British site of Maiden Castle.

- ◉ The importance of the principles of stratigraphy and three-dimensional recording, the need for minute-to-minute supervision of trench, respect for manual labour, the need for involving the public in excavation and other field projects and sharing with it the knowledge acquired about the past all proved to be extremely useful in his later work in Indian archaeology
- ◉ Sankalia joined Deccan College in 1939 as Professor of Proto-Indian and Ancient Indian History,-remained in it till his retirement in 1973.
- ◉ Additionally, he also served as Joint Director of the Institute for many years and as its Director from 1956 to 1959 and from 1970 to 1973.
- ◉ It may be recalled that after a brief interval of five years Deccan College, which had hitherto been undertaking undergraduate teaching only, was revived in 1939 by Bombay Government as a postgraduate and research institute for imparting postgraduate education and undertaking research in linguistics, archaeology and anthropology.

- ◉ Sankalia's own research in archaeology commenced in 1939 itself with the discovery of a megalithic burial site near Bhosari (a suburb of Poona).
- ◉ Sankalia and his colleagues/students conducted investigations practically in every branch of archaeology and in every part of the country (Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Kashmir, Assam, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala).
- ◉ This wide geographical coverage, together with Sankalia's ready acceptance of students and faculty members alike from all parts of the country and encouragement to them irrespective of regional, linguistic and religious considerations, won for the Department the coveted status of a national centre for archaeological research.
- ◉ In collaboration with his colleagues Sankalia carried out excavations at about 20 places, among which Langhnaj, Dwaraka, Somnath, Kolhapur, Nasik, Nevasa, Inamgaon, Ahar, Maheshwar-Navdatoli, Tripuri, Tekkalakota and Sanganakallu deserve special mention.

- ◉ Made original contributions to various branches: prehistory, proto-history, numismatics, paleography and epigraphy, art and architecture, iconography, ethno-archaeology, and environmental archaeology.
- ◉ Among his contributions to historical archaeology special mention should be made of the initiation of regional studies in historical geography and cultural ethnography based upon the investigation of ancient place- and personal names found in inscriptions, the identification of material culture remains of the Satavahana and later periods through excavations at sites like Kolhapur and Nevasa, and the use of archaeological data for ascertaining the historicity of events depicted in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata.
- ◉ His work on the Ramayana is particularly noteworthy. He used the evidence from excavations, art and architecture, sculpture and even botanical data as the Occam's Razor for scraping away later accretions and interpolations and thus get to the core of the epic story

- ◉ He held that Ravana was probably a chief of the Gond tribe and not a ten-headed demon, that his Lanka or island kingdom was located in the area around Jabalpur in Madhya Pradesh and not in Sri Lanka, that Rama never crossed the Narmada river and that his deification began from the 4th century A. D. onwards.
- ◉ Soon after he joined Deccan College Sankalia realized that the archaeologist's job of reconstructing past human life ways must be aided by various biological and earth sciences, and began to take immediate steps in this direction.
- ◉ Sankalia played a pivotal role in the development of pre- and proto-historic studies in the country
- ◉ His excavations at Langhnaj and other sites in Gujarat (from 1941 to 1963) were the first of their kind in the country aimed to reconstruct the Mesolithic phase (its stratigraphical position, material culture and food economy, and the racial features of its authors).

- ◉ His dassie river valley studies at Nevasa on the river Pravara in Maharashtra (1955) established the relative chronological contexts of Stone Age cultures (Lower Palaeolithic to Mesolithic) on the basis of alluvial stratigraphy and, additionally, brought to light the Middle Palaeolithic culture for the first time in India.
- ◉ Subsequently, his colleagues and students recognized a similar succession of Stone Age cultures in many parts of central, western and south India
- ◉ His detailed surveys and excavations at the Neolithic site of Sanganakallu in South India (1965) revealed the existence of three Stone Age cultures below the Neolithic deposits, viz., a Middle Palaeolithic industry of basalt, a flake-cum-blade industry of quartz with Upper Palaeolithic affiliation, and a Mesolithic industry of siliceous rocks.



- ◉ In 1968 Sankalia established the presence of Early Man in Kashmir by recovering artifactual data from boulder conglomerate of Second Glacial age at a place called Pahlgam on the river Liddar,.
- ◉ In protohistory Sankalia's lasting contribution lies in the identification of Ahar, Malwa and Jorwe cultures of the Chalcolithic phase.
- ◉ These cultures date to the time period between the second millennium B. C. and early part of the first millennium B. C
- ◉ His book *New Archaeology: Its Scope and Application to India (1977)* is the first and only one of its kind published in the country so far.
- ◉ He achieved a great measure of success in the application of processual perspective of the New Archaeology in his prolonged excavations at the Chalcolithic site of Inamgaon and also exhorted his colleagues to test it in their respective research projects.
- ◉ Sankalia considered teaching a sacred duty and took keen personal interest in the work and welfare of his students. About 50 Ph. D. dissertations were completed under his supervision.

- ◉ In recognition of his outstanding services to Indian archaeology Sankalia was bestowed with numerous prizes, fellowships and public honours.
- ◉ The notable among these were the presentation of Chakrabarty Silver Medal by the Asiatic Society of Bengal (1972) and Roben Bruce Foote Plaque by Calcutta University for his work in prehistory; and the award of a Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fellowship (1968-70) for carrying out an integrated study of prehistoric and protohistoric cultures and the title of Padma Bhushan in 1974 by the Government of India for his overall contribution to Indian archaeology.