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PHYSICAL & ARCHAEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

1. Computer Science COVID-19 data presented at Anthropology conference

New Mexico Highlands University faculty and students presented their findings on using artificial intelligence and machine learning to model the spread of COVID-19 on the Navajo Nation at the Society for Applied Anthropology Annual Conference in March.

The ongoing research project was featured in the prestigious Anthony Paredes Plenary Session at the international conference, which highlights and explores issues in contemporary Native American research.

"Our major finding to date is that the fact that the Navajo Nation was very proactive in enforcing strict quarantines and other safety policies on the reservation helped drive the curve down on the spread of the coronavirus," said Gil Gallegos, a Highlands computer science professor and lead researcher. "There's a direct correlation between following policy and saving lives."

Gallegos said another important finding was that the language barrier on the Navajo Nation led to misconceptions about the seriousness of the coronavirus.

"This language barrier led some Navajo people to believe COVID-19 was more like the flu or a bad cold, which influenced some people to not adhere as closely to some of

the safety measures like social distancing, mask wearing and frequent hand washing," Gallegos said.

In May 2020, the National Science Foundation awarded Highlands a "rapid response" $187,094 grant to study COVID-19 cases on the Navajo Nation using machine learning and artificial intelligence.

"Machine learning is using computer algorithms for calculations used to analyze, predict and classify complex data sets, such as those found in COVID-19 data. Artificial intelligence, sometimes called deep learning, gave us more horsepower to really dig into the data," Gallegos said.

Gallegos, who chairs the Computer and Mathematical Sciences Department at Highlands, led the team of researchers at the university that delved into the public COVID-19 data from the Navajo Nation and the New Mexico Department of Health. Other faculty team members include Orit Tamir, anthropology professor, and Tatiana Timofeeva, chemistry professor.

In addition, five Highlands computer science graduate students participated in the research including Fernando Sarracino, who is a member of the Navajo Nation, Viktor Glebov, Jesse Ibarra, Svetlana Ryabova and Christopher Torres. Manuel Steele from St. Mary's College was also part of the student team.

"My students are self-starters who did a fantastic job of developing mathematical computer models for virus spread and combined them with machine learning algorithms, which

are step by step workflows to solve a problem. The professors on the project gave the students guidance and they rose to the occasion. I'm very proud of what the students accomplished," Gallegos said.

The students presented a PowerPoint depiction of their computer models at the anthropology conference.

Tamir worked on correspondence and communication with the Navajo Nation and Navajo friends with whom she has developed close ties through her cultural anthropology research for more than three decades.

Tamir said that many factors contributed to the initial rapid spread of COVID-19 on the Navajo Nation, such as multigenerational Navajo households and infrastructure problems.

"Shocking infrastructure woes on the Navajo Nation contributed to the horrific spread of COVID-19 early on," Tamir said. "For instance, depending on the season, 30% to 40% of Navajo homes do not have running water or indoor plumbing. This made following CDC and Navajo Nation guidance regarding hand washing very challenging," Tamir said.

2. New Fossils of Homo erectus Found in Kenya

Paleoanthropologists have uncovered two new specimens of *Homo erectus* at the East Turkana site in Kenya. They've also

verified the age of a skull fragment of *Homo erectus* — one of the oldest specimens attributable to this species — found earlier at the same site.

"*Homo erectus* is the first hominin that we know about that has a body plan more like our own and seemed to be on its way to being more human-like," said Dr. Ashley Hammond, a researcher at the American Museum of Natural History.

"It had longer lower limbs than upper limbs, a torso shaped more like ours, a larger cranial capacity than earlier hominins, and is associated with a tool industry — it's a faster, smarter hominin than *Australopithecus* and earliest *Homo*."

In 1974, scientists at the East Turkana site in Kenya found one of the oldest specimens of *Homo erectus*: a 1.9-million-year-old skull fragment. The specimen is only surpassed in age by a 2-million-year-old skull specimen in South Africa.

But there was pushback within the field, with some paleoanthropologists arguing that the East Turkana specimen could have come from a younger fossil deposit and was possibly moved by water or wind to the spot where it was found.

To pinpoint the locality, Dr. Hammond and colleagues relied on archival materials and geological surveys.

'We had to go through hundreds of pages from old reports and published research, reassessing the initial evidence and

searching for new clues," said Dr. Dan Palcu, a geoscientist at the University of São Paulo and Utrecht University.

"We also had to use satellite data and aerial imagery to find out where the fossils were discovered, recreate the scene, and place it in a larger context to find the right clues for determining the age of the fossils."

Although located in a different East Turkana collection area than initially reported, the skull specimen was found in a location that had no evidence of a younger fossil outcrop that may have washed there. This supports the original age given to the fossil.

A partial pelvis of *Homo erectus* found at the East Turkana site in Kenya. Image credit: A. Hammond / American Museum of Natural History.

Within 50 m of the reconstructed location, the researchers found two new specimens: a partial pelvis and a foot bone.

"Although they could be from the same individual, there's no way to prove that after the fossils have been separated for so long," they said.

"But they might be the earliest postcrania specimens yet discovered for *Homo erectus*."

"Our work also suggests that this early *Homo erectus* was found in a paleoenvironment that included primarily grazers that prefer open environments to forest areas and was near a stable body of water, as documented by freshwater sponges preserved in the rocks."

3. Northeast citizens faced racial discrimination amid COVID-19 outbreak, says govt. study

They were "harassed, abused and traumatised" and disparagingly called 'coronavirus,' says study

A study commissioned by the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) on racial discrimination and hate crimes against people from the northeast States found that the

"northeast India seamlessly fits [an] Indian's imagination of a Chinese person".

The study found that 78% of the people from the region who were interviewed believed that physical appearance was the most important reason for prejudice against them.

The study said amid the COVID-19 outbreak last year, people from the region "faced an increased number of acts of hate and prejudices against them".

A series of attacks were reported in various parts of the country where people from the region were "harassed, abused, and traumatised" and were disparagingly called 'coronavirus,' the study said.

The Hindu accessed the findings of the unpublished report. The Centre for Criminology and Victimology at the National Law University (NLU), Delhi conducted the study under the aegis of the ICSSR, Delhi, on the prevalence of hate crimes against the people of the region in six metropolitan cities — Mumbai, Pune, Delhi, Chennai, Bengaluru and Hyderabad.

Around 1200 persons, mostly women from Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura were interviewed for the research. The study's associate is Dr. Garima Paul of the NLU.

G.S. Bajpai, Chairperson of the Centre, said the majority of those interviewed faced discrimination when it came to renting an accommodation, visit to a restaurant and even transportation.

"The study revealed that the hate crime and racial discrimination against people from the northeast is deep-rooted even in the cosmopolitan cities. Most of them faced problems while renting a house, even in restaurants they faced issues forcing them to eat mostly in eateries run by people from their communities. These issues cannot be solved by policing alone," Prof. Bajpai said.

The study quotes a 2020 report from Right and Risks Analysis Group (RRAG) that found a significant upsurge in acts of racial discrimination against people from the region. It mentions 22 reported cases of racial discrimination or hate crimes between February and March 25, 2020.

It examined various kinds of security concerns and experiences faced in their daily life.

"The risk of being victimised in racial hatred remains subtle yet deeply entrenched. The highest number of incidents were reported from Mumbai (44.7%). Interestingly, 78% of the northeast people believed that physical appearance was the most important reason for prejudice against them. It appears as if the northeast India seamlessly fits Indian's imagination of a Chinese person," the report said.

Offensive and abusive language were reported to be most common across all the six cities. Mumbai recorded the highest offensive and abusive language related crime (74%), followed by Chennai (72%), Pune (67.3%), Delhi (64%), Hyderabad (48.7%) and Bengaluru (43.3%). More than 60% of the persons who were interviewed said their studies and work were seriously hampered by such experiences.

"The most pervasive reasons behind hate crime incidents against the northeastern people as per our data analysis were public attitude and insensitivity (44.5%). The incidence of non-reporting of the incidents was as high as 32.3%. As many as 34% of persons faced a common issue of refusal to file FIR by the police. The fear of hate crime was experienced to be particularly high in Chennai (74%)," the study said.

It said the M.P. Bezbaruah Committee in 2014 recommended amendments to the IPC by creating new offences under Section 153C and 509A to to deal with comments, gestures and acts intended to insult a member of a particular racial group. "It also suggested to make such offences as 'gender-neutral', 'cognizable' and 'non-bailable' with imprisonment extendable up to three years or five years with fine, respectively. The Supreme Court in Karma Dorji & Others vs Union of India & Others (2014) made several recommendations for the prevention and monitoring of racial hatred and violence. Though, not much seems to have been done in this regard," said the study.

Earlier in December 2020, a report by the Nagaland government said the stranded State residents were subjected to "racism and harassment" in the wake of the March 24, 2020 nationwide lockdown.

4. Creativity and community: How modern humans overcame the Neanderthals

Study identifies creativity genes that set Homo sapiens apart from close living and extinct relatives

Summary:

A new study is the first-ever to identify the genes for creativity in Homo sapiens that distinguish modern humans from chimpanzees and Neanderthals. The research identified 267 genes that are found only in modern humans and likely play an important role in the evolution of the behavioral characteristics that set apart Homo sapiens, including creativity, self-awareness, cooperativeness, and healthy longevity. The study, led by an international and interdisciplinary team of researchers from the American Museum of Natural History and Washington University among other institutions, is published today in the journal Molecular Psychiatry.

"One of the most fundamental questions about human nature is what sparked the explosive emergence of creativity in modern humans in the period just before and after their widespread dispersal from Africa and the related extinction of Neanderthals and other human relatives," said study co-author Ian Tattersall, curator emeritus in the American Museum of Natural History's Division of Anthropology. "Major controversies persist about the basis for human creativity in art and science, as well as about potential

differences in cognition, language, and personality that distinguish modern humans from extinct hominids. This new study is the result of a truly pathbreaking use of genomic methodologies to enlighten us about the mechanisms underpinning our uniqueness."

Modern humans demonstrate remarkable creativity compared to their closest living relatives, the great apes (chimpanzees, gorillas, and orangutans and their immediate ancestors), including innovativeness, flexibility, depth of planning, and related cognitive abilities for symbolism and self-awareness that also enable spontaneous generation of narrative art and language. But the genetic basis for the emergence of creativity in modern humans remains a mystery, even after the recovery of full-genome data for both chimpanzees and our extinct close relatives the Neanderthals.

"It has been difficult to identify the genes that led to the emergence of human creativity before now because of the large number of changes in the human genome after it diverged from the common ancestor of humans and chimpanzees around 10 million years ago, as well as uncertainty about the functions of those changes," said Robert Cloninger, a psychiatrist and geneticist at Washington University in St. Louis, and the lead author of the study. "Therefore, we began our research by first identifying the way the genes that influence modern human personality are organized into coordinated systems of learning that have allowed us to adapt flexibly and creatively to changing life conditions."

The team led by Cloninger had previously identified 972 genes that regulate gene expression for human personality, which is comprised of three nearly separate networks for learning and memory. One, for regulating emotional reactivity -- emotional drives, habit learning, social attachment, conflict resolution -- emerged in monkeys and apes about 40 million years ago. The second, which regulates intentional self-control -- self-directedness and cooperation for mutual benefit -- emerged a little less than 2 million years ago. A third one, for creative self-awareness, emerged about 100,000 years ago.

In the latest study, the researchers discovered that 267 genes from this larger group are found only in modern humans and not in chimpanzees or Neanderthals. These uniquely human genes code for the self-awareness brain network and also regulate processes that allow Homo sapiens to be creative in narrative art and science, to be more prosocial, and to live longer lives through greater resistance to aging, injury, and illness than the now-extinct hominids they replaced.

Genes regulating emotional reactivity were nearly the same in humans, Neanderthals, and chimps. And Neanderthals were about midway between chimps and Homo sapiens in their genes for self-control and self-awareness.

"We found that the adaptability and well-being of Neanderthals was about 60 to 70 percent of that of Homo sapiens, which means that the difference in fitness between them was large," Cloninger said. "After the more creative, sociable, and physically resilient Homo sapiens migrated out

of Africa between 65,000 and 55,000 years ago, they displaced Neanderthals and other hominids, who all became extinct soon after 40,000 years ago."

The genes that distinguish modern humans from Neanderthals and chimpanzees are nearly all regulatory genes made of RNA, not protein-coding genes made of DNA.

"The protein-coding genes of Homo sapiens, Neanderthals, and chimps are nearly all the same, and what distinguishes these species is the regulation of the expression of their protein-coding genes by the genes found only in humans," said co-author Igor Zwir, a computer scientist at Washington University School of Medicine and the University of Granada. "We found that the regulatory genes unique to modern humans were constituents of clusters together with particular protein-coding genes that are overexpressed in the human brain network for self-awareness. The self-awareness network is essential to the physical, mental, and social well-being of humans because it provides the insight to regulate our habits in accord with our goals and values."

The researchers determined that the genes unique to modern humans were selected because of advantages tied to greater creativity, prosocial behavior, and healthy longevity. Living longer, healthier lives and being more prosocial and altruistic allowed Homo sapiens to support their children, grandchildren, and others in their communities throughout their lives in diverse and sometimes harsh conditions. And being more innovative than other hominids allowed humans to adapt more flexibly to unpredictable climatic fluctuations.

"In the bigger picture, this study helps us understand how we can effectively respond to the challenges that modern humans currently face," Tattersall said. "Our behavior is not fixed or determined by our genes. Indeed, human creativity, prosociality, and healthy longevity emerged in the context of the need to adjust rapidly to harsh and diverse conditions and to communicate in large social groups."

Added co-author Coral del Val of the University of Granada, "Now, we face similar challenges to which we must also respond creatively, as we did originally. Unfortunately, when we are exposed to conditions of fear, conflict, inequity, abuse or neglect, our self-awareness is impaired, which diminishes our ability to use our potential for creativity and to achieve well-being. Learning more about the regulatory genes unique to modern humans may help us to promote human well-being as we face these new environmental and social challenges."

5. Modern human brain originated in Africa around 1.7 million years ago

Summary:

The human brain as we know it today is relatively young. It evolved about 1.7 million years ago when the culture of stone tools in Africa became increasingly complex. A short time later, the new Homo populations spread to Southeast Asia, researchers have now shown using computed tomography analyses of fossilized

skulls.

Modern humans are fundamentally different from our closest living relatives, the great apes: We live on the ground, walk on two legs and have much larger brains. The first populations of the genus Homo emerged in Africa about 2.5 million years ago. They already walked upright, but their brains were only about half the size of today's humans. These earliest Homo populations in Africa had primitive ape-like brains -- just like their extinct ancestors, the australopithecines. So when and where did the typical human brain evolve?

CT comparisons of skulls reveal modern brain structures

An international team led by Christoph Zollikofer and Marcia Ponce de León from the Department of Anthropology at the University of Zurich (UZH) has now succeeded in answering these questions. "Our analyses suggest that modern human brain structures emerged only 1.5 to 1.7 million years ago in African Homo populations," Zollikofer says. The researchers used computed tomography to examine the skulls of Homo fossils that lived in Africa and Asia 1 to 2 million years ago. They then compared the fossil data with reference data from great apes and humans.

Apart from the size, the human brain differs from that of the great apes particularly in the location and organization of individual brain regions. "The features typical to humans are primarily those regions in the frontal lobe that are responsible for planning and executing complex patterns of thought and action, and ultimately also for language," notes first author

Marcia Ponce de León. Since these areas are significantly larger in the human brain, the adjacent brain regions shifted further back.

Typical human brain spread rapidly from Africa to Asia

The first Homo populations outside Africa -- in Dmanisi in what is now Georgia -- had brains that were just as primitive as their African relatives. It follows, therefore, that the brains of early humans did not become particularly large or particularly modern until around 1.7 million years ago. However, these early humans were quite capable of making numerous tools, adapting to the new environmental conditions of Eurasia, developing animal food sources, and caring for group members in need of help.

During this period, the cultures in Africa became more complex and diverse, as evidenced by the discovery of various types of stone tools. The researchers think that biological and cultural evolution are probably interdependent. "It is likely that the earliest forms of human language also developed during this period," says anthropologist Ponce de León. Fossils found on Java provide evidence that the new populations were extremely successful: Shortly after their first appearance in Africa, they had already spread to Southeast Asia.

Brain imprints in fossil skulls reveal evolution of humans

Previous theories had little to support them because of the lack of reliable data. "The problem is that the brains of our ancestors were not preserved as fossils. Their brain structures

can only be deduced from impressions left by the folds and furrows on the inner surfaces of fossil skulls," says study leader Zollikofer. Because these imprints vary considerably from individual to individual, until now it was not possible to clearly determine whether a particular Homo fossil had a more ape-like or a more human-like brain. Using computed tomography analyses of a range of fossil skulls, the researchers have now been able to close this gap for the first time.

SOCIO – CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

1. After Mizoram, Nagaland bans sale of dog meat

(Paper 1 :   Chapter 2.1 - Cultural Relativism)

This article is posted to allow you to question and reflect on the question of Cultural Relativism and Animal rights (similar to the debate vs Human rights)

The Nagaland government has decided to ban commercial import and the sale of dog and dog meat. The Mizoram government had taken a similar decision in March.

"The State Government has decided to ban commercial import and trading of dogs, and dog markets, and also the sale of dog meat, both cooked and uncooked," Nagaland's Chief Secretary Temjen Toy said on July 3.

He added that the decision in this regard was taken by the Cabinet headed by Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio.

The announcement followed an appeal by the Federation of Indian Animal Protection Organisations (FIAPO), an apex body of animal rights groups, to the Nagaland government to

ban the sale, smuggling and consumption of dog meat besides enforcing stringent animal welfare laws.

"We are once again hit by shock and horror at recent images that have emerged from 'animal markets' in Dimapur (Nagaland's commercial hub) where dogs are seen in terrified conditions, tied up in sacks, waiting at a wet market for their illegal slaughter, trade and consumption as meat," FIAPO executive director Varda Mehrotra said in a statement on July 2.

The FIAPO said it has been engaging with the Nagaland government since 2016, underlining how dogs suffer because of the demand for meat. It also claimed to have carried out undercover investigations on dog meat in the northeast.

Dogs smuggled
The organisation said dogs are smuggled regularly to Nagaland from Assam and West Bengal. A dog, caught in Assam for rupees 50, is sold for ₹1,000 in Nagaland's wholesale market.

"Dog meat sells for rupees 200 per kg on the streets of Nagaland, which is about rupees 2,000 per dog," it said.

Nagaland and Mizoram-bound vehicles carrying dogs tied in gunny bags with their heads sticking out are frequently caught in Assam. But many such vehicles slip through the security cordons.

2. From Manusmriti to Indian Matchmaking, tracing the roots of arranged marriages

Ignoring the commercial part of this article, it throws some light on social institution of MARRIAGE from a sociologist point of view throughout the history of India in different societies. The books and definition referred in this article can be noted.

 Is Marriage still relevant in India Today ...?
Sociologists agree that the arranged marriage system is drawn from the idea of maintaining caste purity. At the same time, the concept of arranged marriage was also deeply rooted in political and economic necessities.

The concept of the Indian marriage, particularly of an

arranged marriage is of immense fascination in the West.

As a young student in America a few years back, I would frequently meet inquisitive foreigners, intrigued by the unique socio-cultural practices in India. From food to films and family, there was much about the Indian social and cultural landscape that was of interest to the average American. Undoubtedly though, the most common subject to come up during these discussions was that of arranged marriage. A heated conversation with one of my professors, I remember, was one wherein she decidedly told me how she was repulsed by almost everything she read about India- the poverty, the unhygienic and crowded public transport systems, slums, and so much more. Yet she truly desired to fly down to India at least once in her lifetime, to be witness to an Indian marriage ceremony.

The concept of the Indian marriage, particularly of an arranged marriage is of immense fascination in the West. The recent Netflix series, 'Indian Matchmaking' addressed to an international audience, provides a glimpse into the strange Indian way of finding a mate. "In India marriage is a very big fat industry," says 'Mumbai-based' matchmaker Sima Taparia, as she opens the show. Taparia, the protagonist of the eight-part series, owns a marriage bureau called 'Suitable rishta' in Mumbai. Her clientele is primarily restricted to affluent families in India and Indians abroad.

For the benefit of her audience, Taparia introduces the concept of marriage in India in the following words: "In India, we don't say arranged marriage. There is marriage and

then there is love marriage. The marriages are between two families. The two families have their reputation and many millions of dollars at stake. So the parents guide their children, and that is the work of a matchmaker."

Over the course of the next eight episodes, Taparia and her clientele's insistence on fair, tall, beautiful partners, the need for compromise and flexibility, horoscope matching etc., has opened up heated conversations across social media on what is being perceived as a problematic depiction of marriage. At the same time, the series has also opened up a debate on the very nature of 'arranged marriages'.

The ancient roots of the arranged marriage system

It is interesting that despite the fact that Indian art and literature from ancient times has been obsessed with the idea of infatuation and romance, when it comes to marriage, the decision taken by the elderly family members is given utmost importance. Sociologists working on the marital systems in India agree that the arranged marriage system is drawn from the idea of maintaining caste purity.

A 2009 study on the economics of marriage undertaken by Abhijit Banerjee, Esther Duflo, Maitreesh Ghatak and Jeanne Lafortune, suggests that "despite the economic importance of this decision, "status"-like attributes, such as caste,continue to play a seemingly crucial role in determining marriage outcomes in India." "In a recent opinion poll in India, 74 per cent of respondents declared to be opposed to inter-caste marriage," write the economists, adding that even now

matrimonial advertisements in newspapers continue to be classified into caste buckets.

The Manusmriti, the text on which the caste classifications were put in place among Hindus, provides an interesting insight into the way ancient society in India understood marriage. "It advocates marriage to be a social obligation, rather than an individual's private pleasure," writes psychologist Tulika Jaiswal in her book, 'Indian arranged marriages: A social psychological perspective'.

Hindu scriptures written between 200 BCE and 900 CE list out eight different ways of acquiring a mate: Brahma, Daiva, Arsha, Prajapatya, Asura, Gandharva, Rakshasa, and Paisacha. Out of these, only the first four were considered religious, while the remaining four were alliances resulting from romance or abduction. "The first four kinds pertain to arranged marriages in which the parental couple ritually gives away the daughter to a suitable person, and this ideal continues to be maintained in the Hindu society," *writes sociologist Giri Raj Gupta in his article,* 'Love, arranged marriage and the Indian social structure.' Gupta goes on to explain that as opposed to the religious and caste aspect of arranged marriages among the Hindus, the Muslims and Christians in India viewed marriage as a 'civil contract'. However, even in that case, marriages were almost always arranged by the families.

At the same time, the concept of arranged marriage was also deeply rooted in political and economic necessities. Author Sabita Singh in her detailed study of marriages in medieval

Rajasthan writes that political marriages were particularly common during the period of state formation when marital alliances were used for "enlarging one's territory, ending enmity, and for increasing power and status".

As Singh explains, "the evolving patterns of such matrimonial alliances reflected the changing status of the Rajput clans within the medieval political hierarchy."

"When the Rathores of Marwar rose to prominence in the mid-fifteenth century, marriage alliances with them were keenly sought after. Similarly, with the entry of clans like the Shekhawat and Baghela into the mansabdari system of the Mughals, their increased prestige was reflected in the matrimonial arena as well," she writes.

Warfare and territorial ambitions were infact the biggest factors behind the existence of polygamy among the ruling elite. "Polygamous marriages of most Rajput rulers and chiefs was one way of maintaining political network of sagas which could always be called upon in an emergency," writes Singh.

Economics as well as geography at the same time were factors behind the existence of polyandry in large parts of India, particularly the mountainous regions.

Not just in India

Despite the multiple ways in which arranged marriages have existed in India, it is important to note that it is definitely not a practise that is restricted to the South Asian subcontinent. The institution of marriage has played socio-political and

economic roles across the world. In Japan, for instance, the institution of arranged marriage which is still quite prevalent, is traced back to the 16th century when the military class or 'samurai' introduced the practice called 'miai' to protect military alliances among warlords.

The predominance of arranged marriages continues to be seen in Turkey as well, where as recent as 2016, a report published by the Turkish Statistics Institute revealed that 45 per cent of young Turkish women aged between 15-24 agreed to finding a partner through an arranged marriage.

Yet another interesting case is that of China, where in 1950 the new Marriage Law was enacted by Mao Zhedong. The objective was to abolish the feudalistic style of arranged marriages, to give priority to individual consent in marriage. The revision of the marriage law was connected to the land reforms made during the Communist revolution, and it officially put out the message that women were no longer "objects of their father's commercial transactions or their husband's dominions." Despite the reforms though, a 2017 report in the BBC notes that parents remain heavily involved in their children's marital decisions and often resort to matchmaking services. The series 'Indian matchmaking' needs to be watched and critiqued keeping in mind the socio-political, religious roots of the institution of marriage in India and around the world, as well as the way in which it has evolved. A report published in the New York Times in the year 2000 reveals how South Asians have been increasingly resorting to matrimonial websites to choose a partner for themselves, keeping out their families from the business.

Interestingly though, despite the appearance of free will in choosing a partner for oneself, the report reveals that individuals continued to use the age-old criteria of caste, complexion, religion etc. Seen in this context, perhaps Seema Taparia's hotly debated match making skills, will appear to be nothing more than a reflection of the society we live in.

3. Building blocks of language evolved 30-40 million years ago

The capacity for language is built upon our ability to understand combinations of words and the relationships between them, but the evolutionary history of this ability is little understood. Now, researchers from the University of Warwick have managed to date this capacity to at least 30-40 million years ago, the last common ancestor of monkeys, apes and humans.

Across the globe, humanity flourishes by sharing thoughts, culture, information and technology through language—an incredibly complex method of communication used by no other species. Determining why and when it evolved is, therefore, crucial to understanding what it means to be human.

In the paper, 'Non adjacent dependency processing in monkeys, apes and humans', published today in the journal *Science Advances*, an international consortium of researchers, led by Professor Simon Townsend at the University of Warwick, made a crucial advance in our understanding of

when a key cognitive building block of language may have evolved.

Being able to process relationships between words in a sentence is one of the key cognitive abilities underpinning language, whether those words are next to one another, known as an 'adjacent dependency', or distant to one another, known as a 'non-adjacent dependency'. For example, in the sentence "the dog who bit the cat ran away" we understand that is it the dog who ran away rather than the cat, thanks to being able to process the <u>relationship</u> between the first and last phrases.

Dr. Stuart Watson, who carried out this work at the University of Zürich, explains: "Most animals do not produce non-adjacent dependencies in their own natural communication systems, but we wanted to know whether they might nevertheless be able to understand them."

The research team used a novel experimental approach for their experiments: They created "artificial grammars" in which sequences made up of meaningless tones instead of words were used to examine the abilities of subjects to process the relationships between sounds. This made it possible to compare the ability to recognize non-contiguous dependencies between three different primate species, even though they do not share a common language. The experiments were carried out with common marmosets (a Brazilian monkey), chimpanzees and humans.

The researchers found that all three species were readily able to process the relationships between both adjacent and non-adjacent sound elements. Non-adjacent dependency processing is, therefore, widespread in the primate family.

The implications of this finding are significant, says Professor Townsend, "This indicates that this critical feature of language already existed in our ancient primate ancestors, predating the evolution of language itself by at least $30-40$ million years."

4. Just like us - Neanderthal children grew and were weaned similar to us

Neanderthals introduced solid food in their children's diet at around 5-6 months of age

Neanderthals behaved not so differently from us in raising their children, whose pace of growth was similar to Homo sapiens. Thanks to the combination of geochemical and histological analyses of three Neanderthal milk teeth, researchers were able to determine their pace of growth and the weaning onset time. These teeth belonged to three different Neanderthal children who have lived between 70,000 and 45,000 years ago in a small area of northeastern Italy. Teeth grow and register information in form of growth lines, akin to tree rings, that can be read through histological techniques. Combining such information with chemical data obtained with a laser-mass spectrometer, in particular strontium concentrations, the scientists were able to show that

these Neanderthals introduced solid food in their children's diet at around 5-6 months of age.

Not cultural but physiological

Alessia Nava (University of Kent, UK), co-first author of the work, says: "The beginning of weaning relates to physiology rather than to cultural factors. In modern humans, in fact, the first introduction of solid food occurs at around 6 months of age when the child needs a more energetic food supply, and it is shared by very different cultures and societies. Now, we know that also Neanderthals started to wean their children when modern humans do."

"In particular, compared to other primates" says Federico Lugli (University of Bologna), co-first author of the work "it is highly conceivable that the high energy demand of the growing human brain triggers the early introduction of solid foods in child diet."

Neanderthals are our closest cousins within the human evolutionary tree. However, their pace of growth and early life metabolic constraints are still highly debated within the scientific literature.

Stefano Benazzi (University of Bologna), co-senior author, says: "This work's results imply similar energy demands during early infancy and a close pace of growth between Homo sapiens and Neanderthals. Taken together, these factors possibly suggest that Neanderthal newborns were of similar weight to modern human neonates, pointing to a

likely similar gestational history and early-life ontogeny, and potentially shorter inter-birth interval."

Home, sweet home

Other than their early diet and growth, scientists also collected data on the regional mobility of these Neanderthals using time-resolved strontium isotope analyses.

"They were less mobile than previously suggested by other scholars" says Wolfgang Müller (Goethe University Frankfurt), co-senior author "the strontium isotope signature registered in their teeth indicates in fact that they have spent most of the time close to their home: this reflects a very modern mental template and a likely thoughtful use of local resources."

"Despite the general cooling during the period of interest, Northeastern Italy has almost always been a place rich in food, ecological variability and caves, ultimately explaining survival of Neanderthals in this region till about 45,000 years ago" says Marco Peresani (University of Ferrara), co-senior author and responsible for findings from archaeological excavations at sites of De Nadale and Fumane.

This research adds a new piece in the puzzling pictures of Neanderthal, a human species so close to us but still so enigmatic. Specifically, researchers exclude that the Neanderthal small population size, derived in earlier genetic analyses, was driven by differences in weaning age, and that other biocultural factors led to their demise. This will be further investigated within the framework of the ERC project

SUCCESS ('The Earliest Migration of Homo sapiens in Southern Europe -- Understanding the biocultural processes that define our uniqueness'), led by Stefano Benazzi at University of Bologna.

5. Marriage or not? Rituals help dating couples decide relationship future

Rituals such as those centered around holidays and other celebrations play an important part in human relationships. When dating couples engage in rituals together, they learn more about each other. And those experiences can serve as diagnostic tools of where the relationship is going, a University of Illinois study shows.

"Rituals have the power to bond individuals and give us a preview into family life and couple life. We found they help magnify normative relationship experiences," says Chris Maniotes, graduate student in the Department of Human Development and Family Studies (HDFS) at U of I and lead author of the paper, published in *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*.

Rituals are experiences that are shared with others, and they impact communication between individuals. While rituals are typically celebrations such as holidays, they can also be idiosyncratic events a couple creates, such as Friday movie night. Most rituals are recurring events, though some (such as rites of passage) occur just once in a person's life. Rituals have

elements of routine, but they have symbolic meaning that goes beyond routine interaction.

"Rituals provide a unique time to review one's partner and relationship; you get to see a host of behaviors and interactions that might normally be obscured," Maniotes notes. "Some of the ways rituals affected commitment to wed with these couples was by altering their view of their partner, giving them a new perspective."

Maniotes and co-authors Brian Ogolsky and Jennifer Hardesty, researchers in HDFS, analyzed in-depth interviews with 48 individuals (24 couples) in the U.S. Southwest region. Respondents were on average 23 years old and had been in their relationship for 2.5 years. They were randomly selected from a larger study examining commitment to wed in heterosexual dating couples over a period of nine months.

For this study, the researchers looked at the impact of rituals. They found commitment to wed could increase or decrease, depending on the nature of the interaction. Rituals can reinforce bonds and strengthen commitment, but they can also showcase conflict areas and make people less likely to see the relationship heading towards marriage.

For example, holiday celebrations involving rituals could highlight interactions with extended family and provide a window into how people navigate through conflict.

"Rituals seem to really play a role in pausing and slowing down individuals, helping them take a better look at their

relationship. They help them see, 'this is who we are as a couple; this is who we are as a family,'" Maniotes explains.

Rituals may not be the defining driver of where a relationship is going, but along with a constellation of experiences and behaviors it brings up important nuances that affect couples' decision whether or not to wed.

Couples who are dating can benefit from understanding how rituals affect their relationship. That's even more important during current COVID-19 restrictions, where rituals we used to take for granted are less predictable, Maniotes says.

"Just recognizing the importance of rituals in our lives, and the magnitude of the role they play, can help us integrate them in an intentional way," he concludes.

INDIAN & TRIBAL ANTHROPOLOGY

1. Catalysts but Not Magicians: Role of NGOs in the Tribal Development

Abstract

The territories inhabited by the tribal communities of India often attract a wide variety of external agents and agencies for variety of reasons. One very important segment of such agencies often cites development and transformation of tribal communities as the prime objective. The "official" category is the agency of planned change, and its responsibility is to work in accordance with the profile of the job or institution. Besides this, there is another important category, "social worker," whose presence is voluntary, at least in theory. The dominant section of the later is popular as nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). In recent years, efforts are made to

bring together the activities of government and NGOs to maximize the benefit to tribal communities and to speed up the process of social and economic transformation. The idea of government organization and nongovernmental organization (GO-NGO) partnership gained momentum. The results of these partnerships proved positive when compared with the programs implemented by the government organization alone. Several NGOs are successful because they train local youth as resource persons according to the needs of development initiatives. However, it is not necessary that every development activity implemented by them would be successful. In this context, the article examines the role of NGOs in the process of tribal development by analyzing their activities and the results.

Introduction

Voluntary agencies have been playing a key role in the development of society since time immemorial. According to Inamdar (1987), "During ancient and medieval times, voluntarism operated freely and exclusively in the fields of education, medicine, cultural promotion and even acted as succour in crisis like droughts, floods, epidemics and foreign invasions" (p. 422). In the modern era, voluntary agencies are popular as nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). The concept of a voluntary organization or NGO is multidimensional in the form and operation. Ideally, they adopt democratic and decentralized approach for

economic and social development. Vannucci (1989) remarked "NGOs can succinctly encourage real values that come up, satisfying genuine needs and fill gaps in knowledge" (p. 11). However, there is confusion and suspicion among the people about the nature and purpose of voluntary organizations. The NGOs are successful in most of the cases in wiping out such suspicions with participatory approaches. The recruitment of self-motivated and service-oriented people is an asset to these organizations. The aid and finances also play an important role in the functioning of NGOs.

A web portal for NGOs of India, www.ngosindia.com, mentioned in its mission statement "We are committed to social justice, sustainable development and human rights." There are several types of NGOs depending on their level of orientation. They are charitable orientation, service orientation, participatory orientation, and empowering orientation. Voluntary organizations or NGOs may be classified into different types depending on the nature of activities carried out by these organizations. Sinha (1989) classified voluntary organizations into seven groups based on the approaches followed by those organizations. They are charity, welfare, relief, rehabilitation, services, development of socioeconomic environment, and development of human beings. Based on these approaches, Sinha (1989, p. 16) identified four strategies of the voluntary organizations. They are simple charity, supplementing welfarism of the state;

encouraging people's participation and implementing programs launched by the government for larger benefit of the community of village; involving people in program planning, raising resources, implementing activities and sharing fruits of development; and organizing people, enabling them to demand and undertake planning and implementation of development programs beneficial to them. A strategy based on the abovementioned values increases the reliability of these organizations in the public domain. Chaturvedi (1989) rightly points out that "there is a need for development of curriculum (for voluntary organizations) to fulfil the manpower demands according to the government's laid down policy" (p. 7). NGOs may play a supportive and complementary role, but they cannot replace the government organization.

The government of India ensured a significant role to NGOs through its plan documents. First 5-year plan document states that the "public co-operation through voluntary service organizations is capable of yielding valuable results in channelling private efforts for the promotion of social welfare" (as cited in Sinha, 1989, p. 19). In the same spirit, the NGOs are playing an important role in the era of modern development, particularly after the 1990s in our country. In a very short time, "GO-NGO partnership" has become the chant of government in all its development initiatives.[1] Several ministries, departments, and organizations of the central government are participating in the partnership system with NGOs. As it

is stated in the website on NGO partnership system, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Ministry of Women & Child Development, Department of Higher Education, Department of School Education and Literacy, National Aids Control Organization, Council for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology, Central Social Welfare Board, and Department of Youth Affairs are participating in this system. The governments at state level are working with the same spirit to strengthen the partnership system with NGOs. The government of Andhra Pradesh constituted a committee with chief minister as its chairperson to coordinate between NGOs and the government.[2] As a result, the participation of NGOs in the process of development attained significance.

Tribal development in India often understood from the perspective of the "other." The other refers to many entities such as policymakers, politicians, social workers, and researchers. The perception of the "nontribal" development practitioners on the well-being of tribal communities need not coincide with the aspirations of the tribal communities. Lack of necessary involvement of the people from tribal communities in the development planning resulted in their poor participation. The lacunae in the development programs are not properly identified from the viewpoint of the participants. The panchayat raj institutions are crippled with the replication of the

authoritarian and stratified caste structure of the Indian society. As a result, attaining the objective of democratic decentralization and even distribution of the fruits of development remain as a myth. The sociopolitical dynamics of a village influence the implementation of the programs. In such scenario, the NGOs pledge to take the development programs to the doorsteps of needy people. Kilby (2011) observes

Indian NGOs have been involved in development work of one sort or another for over hundred years and have been important in Indian government programmes, as well as being partners for international NGO (INGO) donors since the nation's independence in 1947. (p. 1).

But do they act as magicians to solve all the problems of vulnerable communities?

The role of NGOs in the welfare of the tribal communities of India is very significant. They supplement the efforts of the government. They address the needs and the aspirations of the people. They are innovative and flexible. They operate with little investments but ensure greater participation of the community. They recruit local youth and train them to achieve the objectives of the organization. They build confidence in the people. Vannucci (1989) opines "the existence of powerful NGOs creates a double security system whereby governments may express their needs and requirements" (p. 13). The knowledge and commitment of NGOs help in making the

implementation process more transparent and accountable. The same is explored in the context of Chenchus, a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana states of India.

Chenchus — A Brief Background

The first description of the Chenchus is found in the Ferishta's *History of Dekkan* (Scott, 1794), which describes the people of Nallamalai as on 1694. But it did not mention the name Chenchu. Buchanan (1807) mentioned a tribe called *Chensu Carir* or *Cat' Chensu* or *Cad' Eriliguru* or *Chensu* who lives in the jungles of Madras. According to him,

they live in the little huts . . . have a small piece of blanket, or cotton cloth, to cover their nakedness. . . . The language of *Chensu* is a dialect of *Tamul*, with occasionally a few *Karnata* or *Telinga* words intermixed. . . . Their original country, they say, *Animalya* forest below the *Ghats*, which is confirmed by their dialect. (Buchanan, 1807, p. 106)

Kurnool Manual (Chetty 1886) is the first account to mention the name Chenchu. It describes "A wild tribe called Chenchus inhabit the Nallamalai Hills" (Chetty, 1886, p. 158). In the Census Report of 1891, Chenchu was mentioned as a subdivision of Yanadis. Thurston and Rangachari (1909) describe "The Chenchus or Chentsus are a Telugu-speaking Jungle tribe inhabiting the hills of the Kurnool and Nellore districts" (p. 26). Siraj-ul-Hassan

(1920) in a brief note on the Chenchus of Hyderabad describe "Chanchu, Chanchukulam, Chanchalwad—a non-Aryan tribe dwelling in the hilly tracts which run parallel to the Kistna river and form the southern boundary of the Hyderabad Dominions" (p. 149). Hodson (1922) observed ". . . the Chenchus who lived in caves; even now, here and there, are those who use caves as places of temporary habitation" (p. 31). Aiyappan (1948) describes them as "semi-wild, lazy, drinking set of brigands" (p. 150). The Chenchus were classified into four exogamous groups. They are Telugu Chenchus, Adavi Chenchus, Krishna Chenchus, and Bonta Chenchus (Siraj-ul-Hassan, 1920, p. 149). Haimendorf (1943) emphasized on the same typology but opined that there is no authentic relationship exists between the Chenchus of Nallamalai and other types of Chenchu. Bhowmick (1992) and Gangadhar (1996) classified Chenchu into Konda Chenchu, Ura Chenchu, Yanadi Chenchu, Bonta or Botua Chenchu, Chenchu Dasaries, Koya Chenchu, and Krishna Chenchu.

At present Chenchu is not completely a hunting-gathering or nomadic community but a "pre-agricultural" or "hunting-gathering" community which is in transition. They predominantly inhabit in the Nallamalai hills and the forest of Mahabubnagar, Nalgonda, and Rangareddy districts of Telangana and Kurnool, Prakasam, and Guntur districts of Andhra Pradesh. Haimendorf (1943) opines that the Chenchus "are not only racially but also culturally

survivals of most ancient India" (p. 4). They are identified as a PVTG in 1975. A small portion of the community practice seminomadic life and depends on hunting and food gathering for the subsistence. The Chenchus from peripheral region of Nallamalai forest into wage labor. Very few Chenchus are practicing cultivation. The government and nongovernment agencies have to address the diverse needs and aspirations of the Chenchus.

Tribal development is widely discussed not only by the scholars of various disciplines but also by the social activists, administrators, and politicians. The first prime minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru made special emphasis on the development of tribal communities. His "five principles" for tribal development (Elwin, 1959) guided the policy in the formative years after independence. But the tribal development administration did not follow the vision of *Shri*—Nehru in a true sense. Wide variety of programs and policies were devised for the development of tribals without involving the stakeholders. The top-down approach did not yield results and the bottom-up approach did not adapt in real sense. Therefore, a desired change in the quality of life of the tribal communities was not achieved. At this juncture, it is apt to understand not only the development programs but also the causes and consequences of their failure or success in the tribal areas. An anthropological understanding of the worldview of the tribal communities

and their aspirations is useful to devise appropriate programs.

Development Initiatives

The Nallamalai, the habitat of the Chenchus, is divided by the river Krishna. One part was under the control of Nizam and the other was under the control of the British administration. These administrations influenced the social, cultural, and economic life of the Chenchus in different ways. As a result, a cultural divide has been developed in the course of time. The British, Nizam, and Indian administrations have implemented several programs for the well-being of the Chenchus. Sastry (1993) mentioned that "The entire areas of 6100 acres allotted by British in 1932 as enclosures were surveyed and forest boundaries were fixed by joint teams of Revenue and Forest department" (p. 93). Similar efforts were made by the Nizam government by establishing a Chenchu reserve in 1942. Chenchus were allowed to clear the forest for cultivation and were provided with house sites and grazing lands. A Chenchu Reserve was established under the guidance of Haimendorf (1943, p. 376). After independence, "Stereo-typed programmes have been introduced without taking into consideration the felt needs of the people" (Pratap, 1972, p. 232). But Subbarama Raju, Sugunakumari, and Sudhakar (2006) observe,

The Chenchus' dependency on forest produce for their mainstay has been rapidly replaced by income earning

activities leading to sedentary life. Because of their sedentary life, the cultural transformation has also been noticed mainly in aspects of family welfare, size and type of family, rituals like marriage, festivals, food habits and dressing patterns. (p. 10)

The impact of cultural transformation on quality of life remained insignificant.

There are some alarming problems that concern the state and nonstate actors. The population of Chenchus is not increasing on the lines of other communities. Chatterjee (2006) observes "Over a period of 100 years (1881 to 1981) the increase of Chenchus population was four-fold with an annual growth rate of 1.6 per cent against national annual growth rate of more than 2 per cent" (p. 504). Malnutrition, lack of safe drinking water, inaccessibility to health care facilities, lack of awareness, and education are important in this regard. The hiatus between policy makers and stakeholders is another important reason for the failure of many development programs. Subramanyam (2006) discussed several lapses in the development of PVTGs. He opines, "There are varied reasons, such as defective planning, failure of bureaucracy, insufficient funds, weakness at implementation level, tribal peoples' innocence and ignorance, and widespread corruption" (Subramanyam, 2006, p. 596). In some cases, the policies and programs have a negative impact. In such cases, NGOs are playing a

vital role with their bottom-up approach. The volunteers of these organizations live among people and understand the real needs of the people. They minimize the wastage in the implementation. The participatory approaches and the volunteers drawn from the community are the assets of these organizations.

Role of NGOs

There are many NGOs working for the well-being of Chenchus. They create awareness about persistent problems and act as agents of change. Red Cross Society, Department for International Development (DFID), Sakthi, Conservation of Nature Through Rural Awakening (CONARE), Centre for People's Forestry (CPF), Nice Foundation, Nandi Foundation, Nallamalai Foundation, Andhra Pradesh Right to Eyesight Society (APRESS), L V Prasad Eye Institute (LVPEI), Andhra Pradesh Child Right Society (APCRS), Child Care Organization, Vanavasi Kalyani Parishad, Pragati Rural Education and Development Organization, Sangha Mitra Seva Samithi and Seva Bharati, CONARE, and Centre for Human Resource Development (CHRD) are few organizations doing significant work for the development of Chenchus. Few of these NGOs are working independently and others are engaged in collaborative work with another NGO or government organization. The work of the NGOs for the development of Chenchu community is discussed under the following components: educational development,

health care, livelihood enhancement, vocational training and women empowerment, agricultural development, economic development, development and religious promotion, environmental protection, awareness programs on rights and privileges, and legal support.

Education

Education is very important for the development of any community. It is very essential for the development of tribal communities too. The efforts were made by the Government of Madras and the Government of Hyderabad in this direction before the independence. A school was established in 1904-1905 by the then British government to impart formal education for the Chenchus (Thurston, 1909). An educational superintendent was appointed during the year 1917. Another school was established by the forest department in the year 1918 in Bairluty Gudem (a Chenchu hamlet) of Kurnool district (Mohanty, 2004). After independence, many schools were established in the Chenchu territory. The year 1972 is a landmark in this regard. A separate Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA) was established for the administration of the Chenchus. Many schools were established, but a majority are primary or upper primary schools. There is a gradual increase in the number of school going children in the recent years. The ITDA has established different types of schools. But there is no significant growth in the literacy rate despite having more

than a hundred years of history for the institutional establishment of education. According to Census 2011, the total literacy rate is 40.6% out of which 47.3% male and 34.0% female are literates (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2013).

The NGOs are playing an important role in motivating the Chenchus to send their children to the schools. Vanavasi Kalyan Parishad (VKP) is working for the educational upliftment of the Chenchus. In fact, its prime motive is cultural restoration and preventing the religious conversions or promoting Hinduism among the Chenchus. But it is managing a hostel for the Chenchus in Achampet of Mahabubnagar district, Telangana. The hostel accommodates 150 students. It is serving as a home for the children from third class to Intermediate. The organization provides food and shelter at free of cost. Infrastructure Leasing & Financial Services Limited (IL&FS) is working for the promotion of better educational standards in schools under the name Education and Technology Services (ETS). ETS has joined hands with the government to promote quality education in rural areas. This organization has adopted an Ashram School at Appaipally of Mahabubnagar district. The prime beneficiaries of this program are the students from Chenchu community. This organization conducts two programs known as Learning Enhancement Programme (LEP) and Quality Improvement Programme (QIP). As part of the program, the NGO has supplied toolkits and illustrative learning material for the school. The learning

materials are very innovative and easy to learn, but they are in English. The teachers are not very receptive to new materials because of the problem of the medium of language. The organization did not train the teachers. The teachers discarded the learning materials without making any effort to use them in the teaching-learning process. As a result, an innovative initiative ended in failure.

Health Programs

The Chenchus in the interior forest depends on the traditional medical system. But the Chenchus in the plain areas use the medical facilities of the government. The efforts made by the government to provide medical facilities in the vicinity of the Chenchus. There are 43 primary health centers established in Mahabubnagar, Nalgonda, and Rangareddy districts of Telangana and Prakasam, Guntur, and Kurnool districts of Andhra Pradesh. ITDA established the system of community health volunteers, at least one in every Chenchu hamlet. Their duty is to report the cases to a nearest health center and provide basic medication or first aid to the ill person. They should continuously engage in awareness creation with the help of ITDA on health and hygiene. These efforts have been escalated with the participation of NGOs in the health development of the Chenchus.

Red Cross Society, Nice Foundation, LVPEI, and DFID in Collaboration with Andhra Pradesh Right to Eye Sight Society (APRESS) are playing a vital role by offering better

health care services to the Chenchus. All these organizations periodically organize the health camps in the Chenchu hamlets. Red Cross society under its rural health program conducts health camps very frequently. The mobile dispensary of Indian Red Cross Society with a doctor and three paramedical staff visits the Chenchu hamlets at least once in a month. They conduct health checkups and supply medicines to the Chenchus at free of cost. The organization maintains the health cards of the Chenchu students of Ashram schools. The Red Cross Society and Nice foundation organize medical camps even in the hamlets in the core areas of the forest. Seva Bharati organization provides health services for the Chenchus of Kurnool district with its mobile dispensaries. DFID and APRES conduct cataract operations and lend medical help pertaining to eye care in collaboration with ITDA. They have done 4,378 cataract operations in the ITDA administered region for the Chenchus as well as for the poor people from other communities. The medical help rendered by these organizations is very significant. LVPEI organizes eye care health camps in the schools. They offer free treatment for the minor eye problems of the children and supply spectacles. They offer treatment for the major illness at a 50% subsidy at their institute in Hyderabad, Telangana.

Chenchu Livelihood Enhancement (CHELE) Project

The government organizations ITDA, Girijan Co-operative Corporation (GCC), and Andhra Pradesh Forest Department; the NGOs CPF, CONARE, and CHRD organizations have jointly implemented this project. CONARE and CHRD work at grassroots level. They have few Chenchus in the staff. The project aimed to train the Chenchu men in the sustainable and safe collection of wild honey and the Chenchu women in the sustainable collection of non-timber forest products such as Adda leaf, amla, tamarind, and soap nut. As part of the project, 101 Chenchu women were trained in value addition of the tamarind, 271 women in the value addition of amla, and 102 women in leaf-plate making. The Chenchus were also trained as resource persons to bridge the gap between the collaborative organization and the community. This project was an attempt to bridge the gap between the programs of the government and the people and to realize the full potential of both with the cooperation of NGOs. Two support centers were established under this project at Achempet of Mahabubnagar district and Dornala of Prakasam district to provide training, resource material, and toolkits to the beneficiaries. The project was implemented in 92 Chenchu villages covering 65 core and 27 buffer villages of the forest.

Sustainable and Safe Collection of Honey

Honey collection training program was conducted as part of this project to enhance the livelihood earning

capabilities of the Chenchus. The program is named as "Livelihood Enhancement through sustainable and safe practices of Rock bee honey harvesting through GO-NGO collaboration." Honey collection is one of the most important livelihoods of the Chenchus. It is a potential source of large-scale employment. The program aimed to train the Chenchus in safe and scientific methods of honey collection. It was estimated to have a twofold increase in the collection if the new methods put into practice. The program was conducted in 17 Chenchu clusters of Mahabubnagar, Guntur, Kurnool, and Prakasam districts. Initially, seven Chenchu men were trained for 20 days as Master Trainers at the beginning of the project in 2006-2007. According to the Impact Assessment Report of CHELE project (Narasimha Reddy, 2010), 919 honey harvesters from Mahabubnagar, Guntur, Kurnool, and Prakasam districts were trained between 2006 and 2009. In addition to this, 50 Chenchu honey harvesters were trained by the CPF with the fund assistance from GCC and Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED). They have issued identity cards to all the Chenchu honey harvesters. The kits were also supplied at free of cost. The Chenchu men were trained to collect honey without killing the bees. This method is less risky than the traditional methods. The stipend was given to the participants during the training. The duration of the training was for 10 to 15 days. It was successful in terms of the participation of the Chenchus.

But very few Chenchus managed to keep the kits usable and follow the new methods. Many others continue to collect honey using traditional methods even after the training program. Lack of follow-up and damages to tool kits are major problems. Efforts were made to form the honey cooperatives. But they are not successful.

Value Addition Training

This program is also part of CHELE project. Training on value addition to amla, soap nut, and tamarind is part of this program. This was a failure due to lack of adequate training and awareness. The resource persons conducted the training session for few hours in each village. They failed to convince the Chenchus in such a short time. They impart neither knowledge nor awareness on best practices. It was merely a ritual. The Chenchus are following the traditional methods even after the training program. Not a single case of practicing new method is observed. The authoritative resource persons failed to make an impact on the trainees. One resource person says "this programme is not going to be successful among the Chenchus because they never listen to something useful." Such preoccupied notion is a major obstacle for the success of the program.

Tailoring Training

The APCRS in collaboration with ITDA organizes this program. The program was implemented in a few villages

of Mahabubnagar district of Telangana. One training center is in Appaipally village of the same district. There were 30 trainees in this center. Each trainee gets 30 rupees per day as the stipend. The training is for 3 months. The NGO gives sewing machines to trainees after the successful completion of the training. It is partially successful. Not all the women participated regularly due to the lack of a daily payment of stipend. The stipend was given at the end of training. Some trainees were not willing to lose 50 rupees of daily wage because of training. They register for the program only to get a sewing machine. The program coordinator is not a Chenchu. He was concerned with the continuity of the program than its impact. He assumes that giving a regular wage may lead to the exit of trainees at any point of time. If not, they regularly attend the training program at least for the stipend. But this was proved wrong. Most of the trainees skip from regular training. They attend only when the coordinator visits the training center. Although the coordinator aware of it, he ignores because the fund would be sanctioned by the ITDA only if the training is conducted for a specified number of participants. In Appaipally village, only four women were identified as potential tailors after 2½ months of training.

Other Programs

Agriculture promotion initiatives of the government were not very successful. The mismatch between agricultural

activities and the cultural aspects is the crucial aspect. The NGOs are also not very interested in these activities due to lack of acceptance by the Chenchus. Very few NGOs are ventured into the activities related to agriculture. Nandi foundation organizes training programs and distributes seeds to the Chenchus either on subsidy or at free of cost depending on the affordability of the beneficiaries. Nallamalai foundation organizes awareness programs to inculcate the interest in cultivation. However, its main motive is not agricultural development but biodiversity conservation in Nallamalai forest with the help of the Chenchus.

Sakthi NGO organized awareness campaign on the rights of Chenchus over water bodies and other resources in the forest. Nallamalai Foundation lends the legal support to the Chenchus of Mahabubnagar and Kurnool districts to secure the rights over the water bodies in the forest. They have educated people on the Provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996, and Forest Rights Act, 2006. They have played an active advocacy role and took the problems of Chenchus to the government authorities for necessary action. They have initiated fishing cooperatives. But lack of follow-up led to the failure of these cooperatives.

The oral literature of the Chenchus is gradually disappearing in the wake of modernization, shift of the habitats, and livelihoods. The folk songs and the tales are

gradually disappearing and the younger generation is not aware of them. In this context, Nallamalai foundation encouraged two teachers from Chenchu community to collect the folk songs and the compilation was published as a book. The book titled *Giriginja Girimallelu* applauded not only by the educated Chenchus but also by the contemporary writers in Telugu literature.

Conclusion

NGOs with profound knowledge about the community adopt a culturally sensitive approach to bring the desired change. Such approach builds a trustworthy relationship with the people. This is fundamental to educate the people on the expected outcomes of an intervention. The volunteers of NGOs live with the prospective beneficiaries and interact with them in formal and informal situations. This makes them reliable and helps to execute the programs successfully. However, all the NGOs are not successful. A major drawback of such NGOs is found in the execution of the programs. In the collaborative projects, it was found that the targets of the government organization forces grassroots organizations to adopt short-term methods with no considerable follow-up activities. But the acceptance to any program by the tribal communities takes a longer time. The successful programs are also facing challenges in sustaining their results due to lack of follow-up. The inconsistency in funding and lack of trained and committed staff are other constraints. Some

cases also suggest that there is widespread suspicion on the activities of few NGOs. Either the people or the statutory mechanisms suspect them. Such mistrust of any stakeholder may lead to the defeat of the purpose of an organization. Although it is difficult in some cases to convince all the stakeholders, it is the responsibility of the NGOs to be transparent and to convince people on their activities. They should also act as a bridge between the government organization and the people by playing an active advocacy role. This would be helpful not only for the people but also to the NGO for the successful implementation of the programs. At present, numerous NGOs are operating in the tribal areas of the country without having connections among them. They often invest scarce resources very sparsely on similar activities. It would give better results if they collaborate based on the common interests. It needs a national and international network of NGOs. An agency to streamline the activities of NGOs will be very productive. But, such agency should not kill the autonomy of any NGO. Despite the loopholes, the NGOs are undoubtedly acting as a safety net and playing a vital role in the development of tribal communities. They do not have magical powers to solve all the problems, but they can effectively work as catalysts in the development process.

2. Judiciary helps MP tribal girls to leave behind prostitution and start afresh

Importantly, the Banchhada tribe (which is native to bordering districts in MP and Rajasthan) for generations has been notorious for pushing their minor girls into prostitution.

BHOPAL: Judiciary in Madhya Pradesh's Neemuch district donned a new role on Saturday – mainstreaming teenage girls rescued from highway prostitution.

Fifteen girls aged between 14 and 17 years, hailing from Banchhada tribe in Neemuch, Mandsaur and Ratlam districts, who were rescued by social activists and police from highway prostitution 2019 and 2020, had a rendezvous with judges led by Neemuch District and Session Judge Hridesh during a workshop held in Neemuch.

Importantly, the Banchhada tribe (which is native to bordering districts in MP and Rajasthan) for generations has been notorious for pushing their minor girls into prostitution.

The tribe is no longer confined only to using their own daughters, but has also been forcing girls trafficked from other states, including Maharashtra, UP and Bihar into prostitution rackets operated in deras (makeshift shelters) and illegal dhabas on the highway connecting MP with Rajasthan.

Organised under the joint banner of Neemuch District Legal Services Authority and a local NGO Project Mission Mukti, the workshop saw the District and Session Judge and other members of the Authority motivate the Banchhada tribe girls (rescued from highway prostitution) emulate the success attained by young women of their own tribe.

"It's you and your parents who decide whether to plunge again into earning quick money, which has been the

practice for decades or to replicate the feats of other girls of your own community, who have taken a different route and excel in academics to make careers in diverse fields," Judge Hridesh said.

25 young women from Banchhada tribe alone were rescued, who are now engaged in diverse professions, including teaching, nursing and police force. These young women included health worker Sandhya Chouhan, Anganwadi worker Laxmi Malwi, health department motivator Vaishali Chouhan and Megha Malwi, a young graduate preparing for a job with MP Police.

"This event exemplifies that the Legal Services Authority is no longer confined only to rendering free of cost legal services/advocates. It has a bigger social role to perform by motivating girls from a particular community to bid adieu to prostitution and achieve something big in their lives, just like other girls and women of the same community. The girls rescued shared with us their pains and problems, we've ensured that the Legal Services Authority will help them in addressing their problems," the Neemuch District and Session Judge said after the first-of-its-kind interaction.

"It's the first time that judges have taken time out of their busy schedule to act as an ideal medium for mainstreaming girls rescued from prostitution. Importantly, it wasn't just the girl rescued from prostitution, but also their parents who forced them into

it who were present and asked to emulate the positive things the other women of their tribe are doing," young advocate Akash Chouhan, whose NGO Project Mission Mukti was a partner in Saturday's event said.

Chouhan had in 2017 filed a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) in the Madhya Pradesh High Court seeking to end the highway/roadside prostitution of girls from his own Banchhada tribe. The PIL is pending a final hearing in the Indore Bench of the MP High Court.

"As per records with us, around 2000 girls aged between 10-12 years are engaged in prostitution rackets run in deras and dhabas near 68 villages of Neemuch, Ratlam and Mandsaur district," Chouhan said.

3. MP tribal women script success story — in Vogue, fashion industry

Sita Vasuniya (25) was an unknown tribal woman in the quiet town of Mandu, 35 km from Dhar. But her anonymity ended when her photograph, draped in a beige and golden Maheshwari silk sari which she had hand-printed in bright hues of red and black, got picked up by Vogue Italia's digital edition on March 29.

TILL FIVE days ago, Sita Vasuniya (25) was an unknown tribal woman in the quiet town of Mandu, 35 km from Dhar. But her anonymity ended when her photograph, draped in a beige and golden Maheshwari silk sari which she had hand-printed in bright hues of red and black, got picked up by Vogue Italia's digital edition on March 29.

Similarly, Kiran Davre (20), from the neighboring village of Sulibardi, was a Microbiology student who also helped out on her family's one-acre farm. Today, she is considering modelling assignments in Mumbai, after her photographs, in a bright yellow sari handprinted by her, did the rounds of the fashion industry.
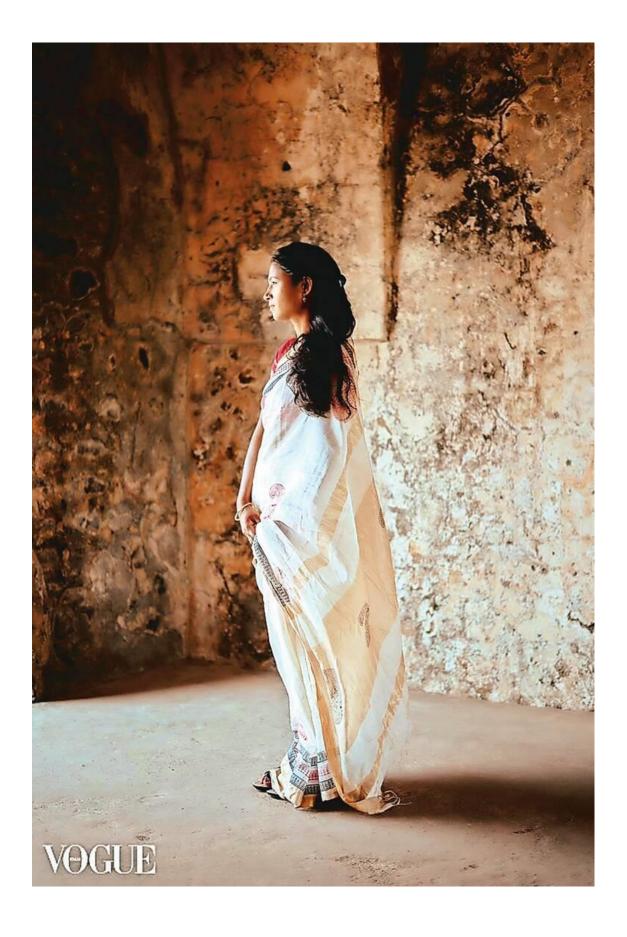
Sita and Kiran are part of a group of 10 tribal women who are scripting their own stories of economic and social independence — one sari at a time.

It was only in January that these women, from neighboring villages in Mandu, were roped in for Dhara, a self-help group set up by the district administration to provide sustainable livelihood to women under Madhya Pradesh's Ek Jila, Ek Utpad Scheme. There are two other such groups — Suraj and Chandani.

Helmed by Dhar's Additional District Magistrate Saloni Sidana, the group was trained in the traditional handicraft, albeit with a modern twist which included innovation in the texture of fabric, design and colour.

Instead of the conventional 'Bagh' design of flower motifs, the district administration tied up with the National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT) and Nation Institute of Design (NID) to explore new designs.

Meanwhile, a team of 40, headed by Aman Akash, part of Enactus SRCC, an NGO, conducted a market survey to understand the demands in the textile industry and the ways to reinvent. The team also created a database of prospective clients.

Women of the self-help group. (Courtesy: Aditi Gupta)

"We wanted to create products that appeal to all age groups, and women in different professions who can wear these saris in various seasons. We came up with several designs, playing around with the geometry, and also experimenting with the fabric," said Sidana.

A local handicraft artist, Gurudutt Kathe, was roped in to train the women. They learnt to print the wooden blocks on delicate fabric, experimenting with various forms — from Batik to Dabu printing. They were also trained in threadwork and hand painting.

But when the first batch of saris were ready, the second wave of Covid-19 made travelling difficult. Aditi Gupta, a Delhi-based photographer, was roped in so that the saris could be displayed in a catalogue instead. And the women modelled their saris themselves.

"They told us to dress as we usually do. We were not made to put on any make-up or anything that was not us," said Mona Daver, another member of Dhara who has become an expert in Batik printing.

The 10 women were photographed against the picturesque backdrops of historical monuments around Mandu. Gupta later shared these photographs – on a platform for photographers called Photo Vogue on Vogue Italia's digital edition, and within her circle.

"My father-in-law called me and said 'meri bahu ne mera naam ucha kar diya hai'," said Sita, a mother of a two-year-old.

Sitting in her mud house, surrounded by her four sisters, Kiran is weighing her options – whether to continue her studies, or take up the modelling offers. "It is her choice, if she wants to go," said her father, Kanhaiya.

Meanwhile, the Dhara women have received Rs 3,000 each for their work. For many, it was their first salary. "I wanted to buy a sari, but I thought that if I save the money, I will be able to help my husband to build our house," said Mona. Sita wanted to buy a cellphone.

The new saris, with their trendy designs, have attracted many homegrown brands in Delhi and Mumbai. Some designers have also sent inquiries, seeking to collaborate and use the printed material for bags and shoes. With many individuals approaching them for single pieces, Dhara has also created an Instagram account to display the saris.

Sidana said they had already received orders for 200 saris. With the new orders, the women in the group are looking at earning at least Rs 10,000 per month. And after the photoshoot, she said, she started getting calls from several tribal women. "Women empowerment is not about holding programmes to mark Women's Day, but about such small actions of upliftment and providing livelihood.

I am glad that their understanding of what constitutes beauty has changed and they can look in the mirror and feel they are as beautiful as anyone else," said Sidana.

Dhar Collector Alok Singh said he had allocated Rs 5 lakh for the project, which may be expanded to include about 25 women. There are plans to get another Rs 25 lakh from corporates, as part of their CSR funding. "We want to ensure adequate funding so that their business can start rolling; they can later self-finance it," he said.

4. How Naga communities came together for each other during the pandemic

Members of Christo Naga's Club, which consists of students, farmers, government and private sector employees, pose with the paddy they harvested during the lockdown in Zhavame village, Nagaland

The close-knit society is falling back on the sense of community and kinship that has been passed down over generations in Nagaland

One evening in June, a group of young men and women gathered in Zhavame village in the foothills of the Kapamodzü peak, one of Nagaland's highest mountains. The lockdown had not yet been completely lifted, and the group mused about the abandoned paddy fields in the

village. Many young people from Zhavame had moved to cities to study or work, and almost half the fields had been left fallow. At the end of the meeting, the Christo Naga's Club, whose members included students, farmers, government and private sector employees, reached a decision: they would begin cultivating the land again.

"Every member of the club comes from a farming background, but this was our first ever experience of farming independently without our parents. In the process, we learnt a lot," says 34-year old Ngapunyi Albert Krocha, a social worker who lives in Kohima but visits his village often.

Zhavame residents get together for a celebration

The lockdown had convinced the group about the importance of self-reliance. They hope to encourage other young people to grow their own food. "We can never know what the future holds, but if we are self-reliant, or have surplus cultivation, we can survive," says Krocha.

Love your neighbour

This is just one of the ways in which communities in Nagaland have come together to support each other during the ill-planned lockdown, which pushed thousands of people into penury. The close-knit society is falling back on the sense of community and kinship that has been passed down over generations in Nagaland.

"If your house burns down, if your family member falls sick or dies, if you are suddenly diagnosed with a life-threatening disease, if your crops fail, your neighbours, kinsmen, clansmen, come to help you build a new house, help care for the sick," says writer Easterine Kire about the Naga sense of community.

Churches too began serving meals to the underprivileged during the lockdown. "Then there were NGOs and individuals distributing packets of food to daily wage workers who had lost their source of income. This sense of community is ingrained in us," she says in an email interview.

Esteemed members of the Chakhesang tribe pose in Hapidasa shawls

Nagaland is a great example of how communities rise to the occasion, explains Rosemary Dzüvichü, professor at the Department of English, Nagaland University. "The commitment towards community is an integral part of Naga culture. Whether in death or celebration, we are taught to stand by each other. We have seen this in the outpouring of generosity from individuals and communities and organisations towards the less fortunate, returnees, daily wage workers who faced the brunt of the lockdown in the State," says Dzüvichü, who is also advisor to the Naga Mothers' Association (NMA), the apex body of women's organisations in the State.

During the worst phase of the pandemic, NMA helped the Rotary Club identify single mothers, HIV+ people and daily wage workers to provide food and essential items,

apart from helping the district administration reach out to orphanages and institutes for special needs children. The NMA also helped raise money and other resources for quarantine centres. It also collaborated with the Salesian Province of Don Bosco and reached out with thousands of rupees' worth of essential food items to the quarantine centres at Peren and Tuensang.

"To reach out to the community, no matter how distant, especially in times of trouble, has always been a part of our culture," says Dzüvichü. It was with this spirit that NMA helped hundreds of women and children from Rengma families, who were forced to stay in relief camps at Bokajan and Silonijan during the 2013 conflict in Assam's Rengma Hills.

What is behind the Nagas' sense of community? In the words of Kohima-based author, former editor and journalist Charles Chasie, "Naga tribes were all head-hunters, but they were also very diverse and practised several systems such as pure democracy, different shades of republican systems, chiefships and absolute autocracy — this is why Naga society is an anthropological goldmine."

Universal values

"Your life, under head-hunting conditions, depended on another person, and blood relationship was important. However, not just blood relationships, friendship also

mattered a lot," explains Chasie. "Different clans had their brother clans in every other village and even tribes where Tenyimia were concerned." Tenyimia consists of 10 different Naga tribes: Angami, Chakhesang, Zeme, Liangmai, Rongmei, Poumai, Mao, Maram, Rengma, and Pochury.

A COVID-19 quarantine centre in Chizami village that was rechristened as a creativity hub to lift the spirits of its residents

Along with head-hunting, the grand 'Feast of Merit' constitutes the basis of Naga social life. Traditionally considered the highest form of social honour, the 'Feast of

Merit' includes rituals and involves giving a community feast to the whole village. Among the Chakhesang tribe, only those who have performed the 'Feast of Merit' are entitled to wear the prestigious shawls, Hapidasa and Saparadu. They can also adorn their homes with Hapiteh, a wood carving of the buffalo head, which is also symbolised in the Hapidasa shawl.

Seno Tsuhah, a community development worker, says that communities in Nagaland come together not only during times of crisis, but also to celebrate milestones or address important issues. "The value-based community life and sense of belonging have always been strong in our society — if we look at our forefathers' generations, the community cohesiveness, the universal values of compassion, were always there, and that is still binding us," she says. When vegetables couldn't be transported into the State during lockdown, Tsuhah noticed how several villagers started visiting community forests to forage and collect wild edible plants so they could share it with urban dwellers in cities such as Kohima. She was also happy that young people were taking the lead in cultivating fallow fields. The greatest realisation of the community, she points out, has been the importance of growing their own food.

Joy of growing food

The members of the Christo Naga's Club are sure that their new initiatives will not stop after the pandemic.

"Now, we are all grown up, living in towns and cities, and we barely get the time to experience the joy of farming. So, it was a personal rediscovery, going back to nature, cultivating our own food," says Rosou Pohena, a veterinarian who is also president of the club.

Around the same time, there have been conversations around local food in Chizami, a village perched in the hills of Phek district. Both at the church and community levels, the importance of growing one's own food and making sure that the local food is strengthened, appreciated and acknowledged is emphasised.

A year since the pandemic, families cultivating small plots of land have begun expanding their farming. Seno Tshuhah is very hopeful that communities will continue to uphold this practice; during the pandemic, the first example of solidarity shown to one another was sharing food. "Food is at the core of our community life," she says.

The pandemic has indeed brought people closer in Nagaland, says Dzüvichü. "It has taught me how important it is to help people in our own towns, both within our communities and beyond."

Members of Christo Naga's Club in Zhavame village at harvest time

Richard Belho, an architect who also does social work, says that the pandemic helped people realise their own vulnerabilities. "People chose to become strong and started helping each other; we started hearing a lot of stories of people coming out of their comfort zones. The pandemic did light up that spirit in people."

Kire says there are several lessons to be learnt from the pandemic, including getting one's priorities in order; creating awareness about the needs of low-income groups in our midst; and nurturing the entrepreneurial spirit among young people who carved out businesses and found new ways of earning an income. "I learned about the resilience of the human spirit even when it has received terrible blows, and also the abiding importance

of family and finding new ways to care for each other," she says.

<mark>5. NITI Aayog's megacity plan for Little Andaman alarms conservationists</mark>

The proposed construction of a mega financial-tourist complex on Little Andaman Island will place at risk a fragile ecosystem and result in habitat loss of the vulnerable Onge tribe and rare wildlife

A plan for the sustainable and holistic development of the 680 sq km, fragile Little Andaman Island in the Andaman and Nicobar group has raised the alarm among conservationists.

The 'Sustainable Development of Little Andaman Island - Vision Document', is the NITI Aayog's proposal to leverage the strategic location and natural features of the island. This, the vision says, will be done by building a new greenfield coastal city there, that will be developed as a free trade zone and will compete with Singapore and Hong Kong.

The proposal is pivoted along three development anchors and zones.

Zone 1 — spread over 102 sq km along the east coast of Little Andaman — will be the financial district and medi city and will include an aerocity, and a tourism and hospital district. Spread over 85 sq km of pristine forest, Zone 2, the leisure zone, will have a film city, a residential district and a tourism SEZ. Zone 3 — on 52 sq km of pristine forest — will be a nature zone, further categorised into three districts: an exclusive forest resort, a nature healing district and a nature retreat, all on the western coast.

There will be 'underwater' resorts, casinos, golf courses, convention centres, plug-and-play office complexes, a drone port with fully automated drone delivery system, nature cure institutes and more.

An international airport capable of handling all types of aircraft will be central to this development vision because "all successful case studies and references" studied by the

visioning team indicate that an international airport is key for development.

The only jetty on the island will be expanded and a marina will be developed next to the tourist entertainment district. A 100 km greenfield ring road will be constructed parallel to the coastline from east to west and will be supplemented with a mass rapid transit network with stations at regular intervals.

The vision plan is not in the public domain, even though it is said to have been finalised months ago. The comparison with Singapore, for instance, is one key. It has a map of Little Andaman overlaid on Singapore's, along with the following statistics: "The population density of the Andaman and Nicobar is 47 people per sq km while it's (sic) 7,615 persons per sq km in Singapore. Its per capita income is $1,789 compared to Singapore's $55,182."

Blocks to development

There are certain factors, the vision document notes, that could prevent Little Andaman from becoming the new Singapore — factors that are "stopping us from developing these into veritable jewels for the country". These include lack of good connectivity with Indian mainland and global cities, a fragile biodiversity and natural ecosystems and certain Supreme Court notifications that pose an impediment to development.

Another key factor is the "presence of indigenous tribes and concerns for their welfare".

There are other concrete obstacles that the vision takes note of: 95% of Little Andaman is covered in forest, a large part of it the pristine evergreen type. Some 640 sq km of the island is Reserve Forest under the Indian Forest Act, and nearly 450 sq km is protected as the Onge Tribal Reserve, creating a unique and rare socio-ecological-historical complex of high importance.

The vision needs 240 sq km (35%) of this land and the solutions suggested are simple and straightforward — de-reserve 32% of the reserved forest and de-notify 138 sq km or 31% of the tribal reserve. And if the tribals become an impediment, the vision suggests that they "can be relocated to other parts of the island".

Sloppy and inappropriate

The vision document has maps with no legends or explanations and uses inappropriate photographs plagiarised from the Internet. It talks of conservation of national park/wildlife sanctuary on Little Andaman when none exist here and it has no mention of the geological vulnerability of the place, which was amongst the worst-affected in the earthquake-tsunami combination in 2004. The waves hit Little Andaman so hard that on December 26 the breakwater there was not just breached, it was

physically displaced and it's orientation changed. Ships could not berth for weeks thereafter.

The plan has no financial details, no budgeting, or inventorisation of forests and ecological wealth and no details of any impact assessment. The nature resort complex proposed at West Bay on the western coast is to have theme resorts, floating/underwater resorts, beach hotels, and high-end residential villas. It is today a secluded and difficult to reach part, one of the most important nesting sites of the globally endangered Giant Leatherback sea turtle which is being studied by the Dakshin Foundation, the Andaman and Nicobar Environment Team and the island administration's Forest Department.

Forest dept.'s concerns

In a note dated September 26, 2020, Divisional Forest Officer, Little Andaman, raised serious concerns about this vision on grounds of ecological fragility, indigenous rights and vulnerability to earthquakes and tsunamis.

The note said such large diversion of forest land would cause obvious environmental loss leading to irreversible damage (more than 2 million trees stand in the forest land sought for these projects), that habitats of various wild animals including endangered sea turtles would be affected, and that the impact could not even be assessed because there was no environment impact assessment

report and neither were there any detailed site layout plans for the proposed diversion.

This note of dissent was a minor irritant and was ignored in the plan and vision that seeks to alter the nature of an ancient island bigger than Chennai and Mumbai in area.

The vision document, described by conservationists as a first bullet through the heart of the island, is to be followed by a second one soon. A meeting is to be held under the chairmanship of the Chief Secretary on February 4 to initiate the denotification of the Onge tribal reserve on Little Andaman.

6. SC seeks Centre's reply on plea for appointment in SC/ST panels

SC ought a response from the Centre on a plea seeking direction for the appointment of full-term chairman and vice-chairman of the National Commissions for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes

The Supreme Court on Friday sought a response from the Centre on a plea seeking direction for the appointment of full-term chairman and vice-chairman of the National Commissions for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The plea said the role of the constitutional bodies was

pivotal for taking into account the issues related to atrocities upon the oppressed communities.

A bench headed by Chief Justice S.A. Bobde and comprising Justices A.S. Bopanna and V. Ramasubramanian after hearing submissions from advocate Rajesh Inamdar, representing NGO People's Charioteer Organisation, sought response from the Centre and others. The plea has argued that headless-commissions had been reduced to paper-tigers and were fast losing their relevance, becoming non-functional and were reduced to a window-dressing, it claimed.

In a PIL filed through its secretary Ankur Azad, the organisation said there was neither the chairperson or chairman and the vice-chairperson, nor the members in both the NCSC and the NCST. Similarly, the top posts of such a panel in Uttar Pradesh are lying vacant.

"This shows the total lack of empathy and seriousness, as regards the rights of the SCs and STs and the redressal of the encroachment and transgressions of their rights. The result of it has proved catastrophic to the whole community, extremely vulnerable. They are now bearing the brunt of being targeted systematically by the anti-social elements," it said.

The plea assumed significance in the wake of the alleged gang-rape and subsequent death of a 19-year-old Dalit girl in Hathras, causing massive outrage across the country.

The petition stated that the role of the commissions as constitutional bodies was important, as they take into account the issues related to SC and ST atrocities. They exercise power of a civil court and can also, like the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), approach the appropriate Court for injunction or mandamus to protect the interests of the SCs and STs, it said.

"Owing to glaring vacancies, the Commissions were being run by the bureaucracy, which made them toothless, ineffective and rendered the victims of the atrocities remediless," it said.

The petition said it was the utmost necessary and imperative that this court directed the Central and Uttar Pradesh governments to make appointments of the respective posts in the concerned Commissions. It also sought a direction for publishing the Annual Reports, within a reasonable time.

The annual report of the NCSC has not been published since October 17, 2016, which was laid in Parliament on August 9, 2018. The Annual report of the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes has not been published for the years 2018-19 and 2019-20, as of yet.

It pointed out that the data of the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) was alarming to its core. The bureau records that there were nearly 45,935 crimes against SCs in 2019, showing an increase of 7.3 per cent over 2018, when

42,793 such cases were recorded. At 11,829 cases, Uttar Pradesh recorded the highest number of crimes against SCs in 2019.

7. A hamlet that thrives on the ancient barter system

Women from Naxal-hit Sukma region gather to exchange forest produce for rice and salt

The Edugurallapalli tribal shandy that gathers on Fridays is reminiscent of the ancient barter system, where tribals exchange forest produce for rice, iodized salt and other commodities. The shandy is in the Chintoor Agency.

A majority of those predominantly exchanging the forest products are Muria tribal women from Banda and

Muriagudem areas in the Naxal-hit Sukma region in Chhattisgarh.

In the 'exchange trade practice', the middlemen have the privilege of deciding the worth of the forest produce, exploiting the tribals who run after them for various commodities. The communication in the tribal language enables the non-tribal middlemen to convince the Muria tribe to sell the products at a throwaway cost.

Rice and salt

On March 19, this correspondent had documented the thriving trade practice at the shandy, where the tribals traded sesame seed, dry Mahua flower, tamarind seed, tamarind fruit primarily in exchange for two commodities - rice and iodized salt. Very few tribals are accepting money to buy other needy things that are not offered by the middlemen in the barter system.

Presently, one kg of mahua dry flower and sesame seed are being traded in exchange for 2 kg of rice or a few packets of iodized salt. The rice being traded by the middlemen is arguably supplied under the Public Distribution System (PDS). At ₹16 per kg, the middlemen are offering 2 kg of rice for the equal quantity of sesame seed and mahua flower. For tamarind and soapnuts, the tribals are offered either rice or salt as per their preference.

A group of Muria tribal women from Banda area in Sukma district told *The Hindu*: "Edugurallapalli is the nearest shandy, where we exchange mahua flower, tamarind and other minor products for rice and other commodities." The women sell other products including orange for cash to purchase something as per their need. A majority of them are women who trade the forest products in the shandy.

On the condition of anonymity, two traders engaged in the exchange of goods said, "In summer, at least six products are traded in the shandy. The number of products traded here changes every season. In some cases, we offer whatever goods are sought by the seller."

Land of Mahua

Mahua is traded in the shandy round the year as the Muria tribe arrives here from India's Mahua Bowl - Chhattisgarh. Another trader from Sukma told *The Hindu*: "A majority of the mahua dry flower, bought from the Muria tribe in the goods exchange mode, will be purchased by the local tribes of Andhra Pradesh". The local tribes brew liquor from the flower for their family and community rituals".

Being a bastion for the Left Wing Extremists until Operation Green hunt, the shandy is run under the watch of the Central Reserve Police Force and AP Special Police

that deploy armed men to keep an eye on the movements of strangers.

The Muria tribe attend the shandy in Chintoor agency by travelling for nearly 40 km and return by evening. Either the tribals or middlemen prefer not to interact with the outsiders, given the existing conflict between the police forces and the Maoists in the Red Corridor.

8. No proposal to implement Panchayat system in Sixth Schedule areas of Assam

- The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) informed the Lok Sabha that "presently, there is no

proposal to implement panchayat system in **Sixth Schedule** areas of Assam".

Sixth Schedule of the Constitution

- It protects tribal populations and provides autonomy to the communities through creation of autonomous development councils that can frame laws on land, public health, agriculture and others.
- Presently, 10 autonomous councils exist in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.
- **Specified tribal areas of Assam:** North Cachar Hills, Karbi Anglong and the Bodoland Territorial Area
- **Specified tribal areas of Meghalaya**: Khasi Hills, Jaintiya Hills and Garo Hills
- Tribal Areas in Tripura
- **Specified tribal areas of Mizoram:** Chakma, Mara and Lai districts

Constitution (125th Amendment) Bill, 2019

- In January 2019, the Union Cabinet approved amendments to increase the financial and executive powers of the autonomous councils.
- The Constitution (125th Amendment) Bill, 2019, was subsequently introduced in the Rajya Sabha in February 2019, that provides for elected village municipal councils.

- The Bill that is still active proposes that the State Election Commissions would hold elections to the autonomous councils, village and municipal councils.

Powers of Autonomous Councils under Sixth Schedule

Executive and legislative powers

Under the provisions of the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, the autonomous district councils have the power to make laws, rules and regulations in the following areas:

- Formation of village councils
- Village and town level policing
- Public health
- Sanitation
- Agriculture and cultivation
- Water resources
- Land management
- Forest management
- Appointment of traditional chiefs and headmen
- Social customs
- Marriage and divorce
- Property Inheritance
- Mining and minerals
- Money lending and trading

Judicial powers

The Autonomous district councils can form courts to hear cases where both parties are members of Scheduled Tribes and the maximum sentence is less than 5 years in prison.

Taxation related powers

The Autonomous district councils can levy taxes, fees and tolls on land, buildings, vehicles, boats, bridges, roads, ferries and on the entry of goods into the area for the maintenance of roads and schools. They can also levy employment, income and general taxes.

9. How civilized are we?

The 'human safaris' to ogle at the Jarawa tribe– a small population of less than 400 in the remote Islands of the Andamans, through routes that cut through their forests – much like the lion safaris, in which we sit inside vehicles and drive through the pathways frequented by the animals. The Jarawas go back some 60,000 years as one of the four indigenous group of inhabitants of Andaman Islands. An extremely shy tribe of people, they have, and want to have, minimal contact with the outside world, with their contacts with outsiders essentially restricted to a handful of Andamanese groups.

The Jarawas are among the earliest populations to migrate out of Africa to fan out wider, and have largely retained their racial purity to date. Clearly, the invasion of the privacy of the Jarawas never gained centre-space in our social space earlier, as it should have.

But it should, if we fancy ourselves a civilized people. It should have attracted serious attention of the nation, when the Supreme Court gave its unfortunate judgment a week ago, allowing tourism to reopen through a major highway, the Andaman Trunk Road built in the 1970s which cuts through the Andaman Islands. A brief history of the issue may be in order. While the tribes remained relatively unmolested until the turn of the century, there has been a spurt to tourism to the Andaman Islands since the onset of 2000s, with a heightened interest to gawk at these distinctively different looking people. About 10 years ago, addressing an environmental law suit, the Supreme Court the road closed for tourism. However, the Lt. Governor ignored the order on the specious premise that the road was 'too important a lifeline for the settlers'. Why that was not an act of contempt of court is anybody's guess. Tour operators and cabbies took to luring the Jarawas with cookies and candies! Such was the traffic through this road that one Jarawa boy had to have his hand amputated following an accident.

The degeneration of our conduct, like much else in our country, reached such pits that in 2012, a police officer was caught on video ordering some Jarawa women to dance in exchange for food. The matter was brought before the highest court once again by a tribal rights organisation

Survival International earlier this year over plans to build a tourist resort near the Jarawa reserve, which was giving a further boost to "human safaris". Unfortunately, the Supreme Court in its wisdom rescinded the January stay, opening the road to tourists. This was a crippling blow to the efforts of Survival International to save the privacy of the Jarawas.

The Survival International's campaign is not without good reason. As recently as 2010, the last person of the Bo tribe – one of the four indigenous tribes – died. If we really care for a different culture, and if we imagine ourselves a civilized society, would we rather gawk at them like wild animals in a safari park, or will be respect their way of life and help them continue their tradition in privacy, as is their desire? We pride ourselves as a civilization that is thousands of years old. And yet, we do not blanch at the fact that we are reducing our so-called civilization to profit from ogling at people whose ways of life may be different from ours. What kind of 'civilization' can we call ourselves? Are we "civilized" at all?

10. How Drokpa women attract men and other stories from India's indigenous tribes

Photographer Aman Chotani is on a mission to

document the traditions and cultures of India's Adivasis, before time and technology sweep them over

The Drokpas of Ladakh sport goatskin capes, hand-made beaded and oxidized silver jewellery and headgears adorned with flowers to attract men. Although not in practice anymore, the community traditionally engaged in wife-swapping. Photo: Aman Chotani

Do you know why Rajasthani men have long, twirly moustaches, photographer Aman Chotani asks me during our interview. "They act as a filter in the desert. Rajasthanis also wear colourful clothes, so they can be spotted easily in a vast desert." The big red turban sported by the Raikas of Rajasthan also has a functional benefit: it protects them from the scorching heat. "The turban serves as a pillow when they rest. And when they need to travel long distances, it accommodates small essentials."

Chotani is full of such nuggets, which he has collected while documenting the last indigenous tribes of India before they "perish and are forgotten forever".

Adivasis or indigenous people and scheduled tribes comprise 8.6% of our population, according to the 2011 census. However, urbanisation is slowly taking away from these cultures. Chotani is building an archive for future generations and researchers to freeze these cultures in history before they disappear. "I have grown up looking

at photos of God. But for me, our ancestors are our creators. These tribes… the first inhabitants of India."

The road to discovery

The Raikas of Rajasthan wear turbans to protects their heads from the scorching heat. The turban serves as a pillow when they rest. And when they need to travel long distances, it accommodates small essentials. Photo: Aman Chotani

Inspired by his mentor Louis Kleynhans, who has been photographing the indigenous tribes of South Africa, Chotani started discovering India's tribes on his travels to remote places. The language was a barrier, so he made local friends, gaining insider knowledge wherever he went. Spending time with the Raikas of Rajasthan led to many such projects. And thus was born The Last Avatar in 2018, an Instagram and web page that chronicles the lives of Adivasis. The project will be converted into a photobook soon.

The book aims to capture 25 such tribes and the photographer has crossed the halfway mark already. So far, he has captured the Aryans or Drokpas of Ladakh, the Konyaks of Nagaland, the Ahirs of Gujarat, the Apatani tribe of Arunachal Pradesh, and many more.

Are these communities welcoming? "Not at first always. It's all about the rapport you build with them," says Chotani, who spends anywhere between one to three months with them. Only when he's built a relationship does he bring out his camera—and this shows in his photos. Nose plugs, shell jewellery, elaborate headgear, from turbans to feathers, and tattoos, his photography brings to life some of the most intricate details and emotions.

 Capturing the headhunters of Nagaland and beyond

The Aghoris, who are staunch followers of Lord Shiva, smear their bodies with ash from the pyre. Photo: Aman Chotani

Besides photographs, Chotani also brings back interesting stories. Like how the indigenous communities of India wear what they do not just for aesthetic reasons.

Until a few decades ago, Apatanis of Arunachal Pradesh donned nose plugs and tattoos on their face. While one theory says that women wore them to make themselves less attractive to abductors, another says it helped them find a husband.

The Drokpas of Ladakh, too, sported goatskin capes, hand-made beaded and oxidized silver jewellery and

headgears adorned with flowers to attract men. "Although not in practice anymore, the community traditionally engaged in wife-swapping. Public displays of affection were encouraged in the community. They lived a freer life as compared to many other tribes," says Chotani. The members of the community are believed to be descendants of Alexander the Great's army.

The Konyaks of Nagaland were known to rip heads when they attacked villages of rival tribes. Those who came back with their heads intact were considered warriors. Photo: Aman Chotani

From zero-waste practices to a strong sense of community, the sustainable way of life has been practised by them for years now. "The people of the Apatani group from Arunachal Pradesh collectively work on each other's

farms and help each other out. The wastewater from farms is collected in a pond and used for farm fishing. Abundance reflects in many spheres of their life," says Chotani. "The people of the community once asked me to join a party in the village. When I asked them what they were celebrating, they said their loss at a football match. They celebrate the little things in life."

Imagine capturing the Konyaks, an isolated ethnic group of headhunters that reside in the interiors of Nagaland, he adds. "Their stories are like modern-day Mahabharata and Ramayana." Konyaks were known to rip heads when they attacked villages of rival tribes. Those who came back with their heads intact were considered warriors. It was believed that headhunting brought prosperity and benefits to their farm yield.

Fading cultures

"The Ahir tribe of Kutch in Gujarat sports tattoos across their arms with symbols of reptiles. They believe the tattoos will protect them from illnesses." Photo: Aman Chotani

Technology, digitisation and westernisation, however, are changing many important aspects of these groups, from their dressing and food habits to traditions passed down through generations. Even in the remotest areas, people have access to mobile phones, the Internet and televisions, he points out. "The cultures are getting lost, and 50 years from now, you may only hear of them at a museum," says Chotani. The Last Avatar aims to preserve these traditions, one photograph at a time.

A woman from the Raika tribe of Rajasthan. Photo: Aman Chotani

The Konyaks of Nagaland believed headhunting brought prosperity and benefits to their farm yield. Photo: Aman

Chotani
Marriages are an alien concept to people of Garasia tribe
of Rajasthan. Live-in relationships are the norm, according
to reports. Photo: Aman

Chotani

Although not in practice anymore, the Drokpa community of Ladakh traditionally engaged in wife-swapping. Photo: Aman Chotani

Until a few decades ago, Apatanis of Arunachal Pradesh donned nose plugs and tattoos on their face. While one theory says that women wore them to make themselves less attractive to abductors, another says it helped them find a husband. Photo: Aman Chotani

11. Schooling Karnataka's tribal students to be guardians of forests

Steady destruction of Western Ghats prompts a group of trekkers to come out with a long-term plan

Children in a government primary school at Nagarbhavi were thrilled to get pen, pencil, eraser, drawing book, and school bag, from a group of trekkers from Mangaluru. Most of 35 students in this school, about 7 km away from Joida town, are from poor families of tribal Gauli and Kunbi communities.

Among their benefactors were two dentists who teach the children dental hygiene. "Did you understand?" asks Dr. Gopinath. Some blink, others nod their heads.

The trekkers then head to another government primary school in Bidoli Patne. A 3-km stretch is slushy and deep in the forest. This school only has a guest teacher. The 15 students are happy to get education materials and umbrellas.

A week ago, the trekkers had distributed material to about 110 students in three other government primary schools at Henakola, Gunda and Avruli in Joida (also called Supa taluk). This is the 12th consecutive year they have been doing this, spending from their own pockets.

About 80% of the geographical area of Joida taluk, located 350 km from Mangaluru, is covered by thick forests. Some students from the poor Siddi tribal community also study here along with Gauli and Kunbi students in 172 schools spread across the taluk. Many of the schools are located near tribal hamlets.

The motive behind the gesture is to empower tribal students. Observing the steady destruction of the Western Ghats during their trekking trips, they felt helping tribal students to become forest officers would be the best long-term plan. A prominent trekker who did not wish to be named said since the tribal community love their forest, they know how to protect it. Yashwant Naik, who teaches at a primary school in Santri, told *The Hindu* that earlier students in many remote schools came to class during the monsoon by covering themselves with sacks. Now, they come with umbrellas and raincoats. Their attendance is

regular — all thanks to the trekkers. This makes teachers teach effectively.

Another trekker said their initiative prompted a Minister to distribute notebooks to some schools for about four years. Some donors from Bengaluru are also doing their bit.

Narmada M. Patnekar, president, Joida Taluk Panchayat, told *The Hindu* that 132 posts of government primary school teachers are vacant in the taluk.

12. Nutrition policy to suggest steps to tackle anaemia

Draft identifies it as a major health problem in State

The draft nutrition policy being finalised by the State government identifies anaemia as a major health problem in the State, especially among women and children.

More women and children have anaemia in 2005-06 than in 1999-99, the draft compares figures from the National Family Health Surveys held those years.

The draft, prepared by the Social Justice Department, says that among infants in the age group of six months to 35 months, the prevalence of anaemia has risen from 44 per cent to 55.7 per cent in those seven years.Similarly, among married women, its prevalence has increased from 23 per cent to 33 per cent.

One in 12 men in the 15-49 age group (eight per cent) is anaemic, with men under 20 more likely to be so than older men. Men belonging to the Scheduled Castes and Other Backward Classes and men with less than five years of schooling are more likely to be anaemic than other men, the draft says. Among adults in the 15-49 age group in Kerala, one-fifth are too thin (18 per cent of women and 22 per cent of men).

Twenty-eight per cent of women and 18 percent of men are overweight or obese.

Under-nutrition among married women has declined in the seven years from 19 per cent to 13 per cent, the policy says. Only 54 per cent of women and 62 per cent of men have a healthy weight for their height.

Kerala has been a role model in many respects, ahead in developmental indicators such as infant mortality, maternal mortality, population growth, birth registration and literacy. But there are areas that require attention. The objective of the policy is to reduce the incidence of malnutrition through short- and long-term interventions. The Integrated Child Development Scheme should look into the needs of adolescent children, especially girls. Anganwadis should be accredited on nutrition surveillance to improve their quality. The nutrition status of people should be monitored and the government made aware of the need for good nutrition and prevention of malnutrition.

13. Tribal body flags concerns over Nagaland's version of NRC

'RIIN could have unforeseen and dangerous implications for the Nagas as a people'

An apex body of Naga tribes has asked the Nagaland government not to be hasty with the exercise to prepare the Register of Indigenous Inhabitants of Nagaland (RIIN), seen as a variant of Assam's National Register of Citizens.

The Nagaland government has reportedly been trying to revive the RIIN exercise that was launched in July 2019 with the stated objective of preventing outsiders from obtaining fake indigenous certificates for seeking jobs and benefits of government schemes.

Three-member panel

The State government had formed a three-member panel headed by retired bureaucrat Banuo Z. Jamir for "studying, examining, and recommending and advising"

on the implementation of RIIN. But the exercise was suspended following protests from community-based and extremist organisations.

The Naga Hoho, the apex tribal body that had objected to the RIIN in 2019, has reacted to the State government's alleged bid to implement RIIN with a tentative timetable for different stages of the updating process.

"The issue of RIIN should be handled with utmost care as it could have unforeseen and dangerous implications for the Nagas as a people," the Naga Hoho said in a statement.

The State government had tasked the RIIN committee with determining the eligibility criteria to be an indigenous inhabitant, authority to authenticate claims of being indigenous, place of registration as indigenous inhabitant, the basis of claims of being indigenous, and the nature of documents that will be acceptable as proof of being indigenous.

Date quandary

The Naga Hoho said it was apprehensive of "dreadful consequences" if the "advocates of RIIN" implement the identification process with December 1, 1963 – the day Nagaland attained statehood – as the cut-off date for determining the "permanent residents" of the State. This

date is likely to exclude Nagas who have come from beyond the boundaries of Nagaland.

According to the Naga Hoho, Naga tribes living in Assam, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh in India and in Myanmar have a legitimate claim to their ancestral homeland.

"There are thousands of Nagas who have bought lands, built houses and settled down in Nagaland for several decades. In the absence of records such as land pattas, house taxes paid or enrolment in electoral rolls prior to December 1, 1963, many procedural anomalies will crop up even within the so-called pure Nagas of Nagaland," the apex body said.

The Naga Hoho also feared that the non-indigenous Nagas could be treated as "illegal immigrants" and their lands and property confiscated. "The idea of the Nagas as a people to live together and their aspiration to live with self-determination will be irreparably damaged," it said.

14. Register of Indigenous Inhabitants of Nagaland

Why in News

Recently, an apex body of Naga tribes, **Naga Hoho** has cautioned the Nagaland Government with respect to preparation of the **Register of Indigenous Inhabitants of Nagaland (RIIN)**, seen as a variant of **Assam's National Register of Citizens.**

Key Points

- **Background:**
    - The State government had formed a **three-member Committee** in 2019 for **studying, examining, and recommending the implementation of RIIN.**
    - **Functions of RIIN Committee was to determine:**
        - The eligibility criteria to be an indigenous inhabitant.

- Authority to authenticate claims of being indigenous.
- Place of registration as indigenous inhabitant.
- The basis of claims of being indigenous.
- The nature of documents that will be acceptable as proof of being indigenous.

  o However, the **exercise was suspended following protests** from community-based and extremist organisations.

  o Since then the Nagaland government has been trying to **revive the RIIN exercise that was launched in July 2019** with the objective of **preventing outsiders from obtaining fake indigenous certificates** for seeking jobs and benefits of government schemes.

- **Register of Indigenous Inhabitants of Nagaland:**

  o The RIIN will be **prepared after an extensive survey with the help of a village-wise and ward-wise list of indigenous inhabitants based on official records.** Also, It will be prepared under the supervision of each district administration.

  o **No fresh indigenous inhabitant certificate will be issued after the RIIN is completed** except for children born to the State's indigenous inhabitants who will be issued indigenous certificates along with birth certificates. The RIIN database will be updated accordingly.

- o The RIIN will also be **integrated with the online system for Inner-Line Permit**, a temporary document non-inhabitants are required to possess for entry into and travel in Nagaland.
- o The entire exercise will be **monitored by the Commissioner of Nagaland.** In addition, the state government will designate nodal officers of the rank of a Secretary to the state government.

- **Naga's Concern:**
  - o **Exclusion of Nagas:**
    - If RIIN implemented the identification process with **1st December, 1963** (the day Nagaland attained statehood) as the cut-off date for determining the permanent residents of the State, it is likely to **exclude Nagas who have come from beyond the boundaries of Nagaland.**
  - o **Loss of Property:**
    - Naga tribes living in Assam, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh in India and in Myanmar have a legitimate claim to their **ancestral homeland.**
    - There are thousands of Nagas who have bought lands, built houses and settled down in Nagaland for several decades.
    - In the absence of records such as land pattas, house taxes paid or enrolment in electoral rolls prior to **1st December, 1963** many procedural anomalies will crop up even

within the so-called pure Nagas of Nagaland.
- **Can Be treated as Illegal:**
  - The non-indigenous Nagas could be treated as "illegal immigrants" and their lands and property confiscated. **The idea of the Nagas as a people to live together and their aspiration to live with self-determination will be irreparably damaged.**

Nagas

- Nagas are a **hill people who are estimated to number about 2. 5 million (1.8 million in Nagaland**, 0.6 million in Manipur and 0.1 million in Arunachal states) and living in the remote and mountainous country between the Indian state of Assam and Burma.
  - There are also Naga groups in Myanmar.
- The Nagas are not a single tribe, but an **ethnic community that comprises several tribes** who live in the state of Nagaland and its neighbourhood.
- Nagas belong to the **Indo-Mongoloid Family.**
- There are **nineteen major Naga tribes**, namely, Aos, Angamis, Changs, Chakesang, Kabuis, Kacharis, Khain-Mangas, Konyaks, Kukis, Lothas (Lothas), Maos, Mikirs, Phoms, Rengmas, Sangtams, Semas, Tankhuls, Yamchumgar and Zeeliang.

Way Forward

- In an already volatile region where the **Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act 1958** is routinely extended, it is **best that Nagaland proceeds with caution in this enterprise.** The **RIIN should not ultimately become a vehicle to make outsiders of insiders.**
- The NRC experiment in Assam witnessed extremely divisive political posturing. Other Northeastern states are sure to be watching with keen interest what is unfolding in Assam and Nagaland. **Emotive political issues cannot be allowed to drive the compiling of a registry of citizens.**

15. Niti Aayog nod to panel for denotified, semi-nomadic, nomadic tribes

Denotified tribes are those that were labelled as criminals through a legislation by British government and were denotified post-independence.

Even as the Bill to accord constitutional status to the OBC commission is awaiting passage in Parliament, the NITI Aayog has backed a proposal by a panel constituted by the Ministry of Social justice and Empowerment to set up a permanent commission for Denotified (DNT), Semi Nomadic (SNT), and Nomadic Tribes (NT). In its letter to the ministry, the NITI Aayog has also offered to set up a

working group to come up with policy suggestions on many issues of the communities found by the ministry panel to be the "most deprived".

In May this year, the ministry had written to the NITI Aayog, asking for its stand on the report of the Bhiku Ramji Idate Commission on DNT, SNT, and NT communities. In response, the NITI Aayog has agreed with the recommendation to set up a permanent commission for the communities on the lines of similar commissions for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes. In its report submitted to the social justice ministry in January 2018, the Idate Commission said such a permanent commission should have a prominent community leader as its chairperson, and a senior Union government bureaucrat, an anthropologist, and a sociologist as members.

The ministry had also written to the NITI Aayog, asking whether it would set up a Working Group for framing Vision 2030 for development of these communities as per the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Stating that a working group of the NITI Aayog could be set up to look into various policy issues relating to the communities, the think tank's letter also supports lowering tuition fees and relaxing admission conditions for children from the communities, and easy allotment of land and housing for members of the community in which 90 per cent or more are landless.

The DNT, NT, SNT communities have been identified as the most marginalised by several commissions set up since Independence. An official from social justice ministry said, "The community has for long not been enumerated in the Census data. The Renke Commission report of 2008 had arrived at a rough estimate of their population being between 10-12 crore but none of its recommendations were implemented. Following the Idate Commission report, Social Justice Minister Thaawarchand Gehlot wrote to 22 ministries for their response to the panel report as it includes 20 proposed policy changes across all spheres."

Niti Aayog's response was part of the whole exercise, the official added. The Niti Aayog has also supported the panel's suggestion to form a dedicated National Finance Development Corporation for DNT, SNT and NTs.

Denotified tribes are those that were labelled as criminals through a legislation by British government and were denotified post-independence, the Nomadic tribes maintain constant geographical mobility while semi-nomads are those who are on the move but return to a fixed habitations once a year, mainly for occupational reasons.

While ministries of HRD, Finance, Culture, Rural Development, and Health have wrote back on

recommendations concerning their ministries, the rest are yet to respond. Some of the major recommendations of the panel include granting Constitutional protection to these communities under a separate third schedule after Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, making them eligible for reservation, and extending the protective cover of Prevention of Atrocities Act to them.

16. Marriage Is Driving Tribal Families Into Debt In MP. These Activists Are Trying To Change That.

These activists are working with tribes people of Madhya Pradesh to cap marriage expenditures and prevent families from plunging into debt or having to sell off their lands to pay for their children's weddings.

In villages across Western Madhya Pradesh a group of tribal activists are campaigning with influential members to cap high-spending on weddings that's pushing rural families into debt.

Influences from non-tribal cultures and traditions as well as the growing practice of one-upmanship in marriages are some of the factors that are contributing to increasing costs of weddings in villages in the area. Instead of it being a special occasion that families look forward to, marriages are becoming a huge burden to families as they simply cannot afford them.

Today, a typical marriage for these tribes-people can cost close to Rs. 5 lakh, an amount that for most is just too high.

In response to the issue, tribal activists associated with three organisations, Khedut Mazdoor Chetana Sangath (KMCS), Adivasi Ekta Parishad and Jai Adivasi Yuva Shakti, have launched a campaign to cap spending lavishly on weddings in an attempt to drive down the unaffordable costs burdening tribal families.

Families are taking on the huge pressure of financing weddings that they simply can't afford. Many are in pursuit of weddings that are bigger, have more food, more guests and more expensive outfits and are taking out

loans with very high interests, which they are unable to pay, or selling off their land.

"Marriage is becoming a millstone on the neck of grooms, and it has become a sort of competition between tribal over who has the 'most expensive bride'. This should end as it is ruining the tribal" social activist Tapan Bhattacharya told The Hindustan Times.

The campaign comes after Ranjeet Ranjan, the Congress MP from Supaul in Bihar, introduced a bill in Parliament aiming to cap the lavishness of Indian weddings. The proposed Marriages (Simple Solemnisation, Compulsory Registration and Prevention of Wastage of Food Items) Bill, 2016 aims to 'prohibit extravagant and wasteful expenditure and show of wealth on marriages' on all marriages performed in the country and to prevent the wastage of food.

Amongst other things, the bill aims to cap wedding expenditures to Rs 5 lakh each for the bride and groom's family, make food wastage a criminal offence, limit the number of guests in attendance and the dishes served, and set up a welfare fund to which families spending over Rs 5 lakh will have to contribute to the wedding of girls from poor families. The penalties include imprisonment and fines.

The bill comes in recognition of how the growing 'trend or craze' to splurge on lavish weddings is causing the

country's poor majority to take on high loans in pursuit of the same luxury, driving them **into** overwhelming debt.

Weddings in rural India are becoming bigger and more lavish.

The group of activists has been working with key individuals in the tribal districts of Jhabua, Dhar, Alirajpur and Barwani in an attempt to come up with a consensus on the issue. A major meeting has been called for April 5 in Bhavra town of Alirajpur district to move the campaign forward.