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## **CONTENTS**

### **PAPER -1**

#### **PHYSICAL & ARCHAEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY**

1. Using CRISPR - Cas9 to Target Fat Cells in Genetic Study of Obesity
2. The Kunga Was a Status Symbol Long Before the Thoroughbred
3. Emotional Education: An Anthropological Approach
4. First woman reported cured of HIV after stem cell transplant: Study
5. Forensic anthropological analysis performed on Baroque-period marble sculpture
6. Human species who lived 500,000 years ago named as Homo bodoensis

#### **SOCIO – CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY**

1. The society where a man is never the boss : The kingdom of women
2. Fund my studies, I'll get you to Canada – Now Punjabi men are being abandoned by NRI wives

## PAPER - 2

### **INDIAN & TRIBAL ANTHROPOLOGY**

1. 'Pathshalas' making change in tribals' life
2. Mulugu: Tribal welfare, a myth
3. Visakhapatnam: Eco-friendly crafts of tribals catch eyeballs
4. Tribals and their divinity concept
5. The Man Who Took Gond Art From Tribal Huts to The World's Top Museums
6. Digital Anthropology is key for successful digital transformation
7. Lessons On Sustainability From Marginalised Tribal Communities
8. Nature-Loving Tribe That Fought To Save Their Sacred Peak & Succeeded!
9. Enlarge the Panchsheel approach to tribal upliftment
10. Government urged to reserve 100% jobs for tribals in Agency areas
11. Indigenous Baiga women in India: "Our story should be heard"
12. India's Tribal Communities- The Bonda Tribe of Odisha
13. New report highlights the neglect of the health of India's tribal communities
14. Ministry of Tribal Affairs in collaboration with TRI Telangana organised workshop on 'Indigenous Knowledge & Health Care: The Way Forward'
15. Are India's healthcare goals inclusive of tribal peoples?
16. The new ways to save tribal languages
17. Gujarat tribals oppose river linking project
18. Tribals migrated from Chhattisgarh face eviction in AP, Telangana

## PHYSICAL & ARCHAEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

### 1. Using CRISPR - Cas9 to Target Fat Cells in Genetic Study of Obesity

**Topic in Syllabus : Application of anthropology paper 1 chapter 12**



Fat—it is vital for life but too much can lead to a host of health problems. Studying how fat tissue, or adipose, functions in the body is critical for understanding obesity and other issues. But structural differences in fat cells and their distribution throughout the body make doing so challenging.

“Fat cells are different from other cells in that they lack unique cell surface receptors and only account for a minority of the cells within fat tissue,” said Steven Romanelli, Ph.D., from the Department of Molecular & Integrative Physiology at the University of Michigan.

In a new paper published in the *Journal of Biological Chemistry*, Romanelli, Ormand MacDougald, Ph.D. and their colleagues describe a breakthrough using CRISPR-Cas9, a tool that has transformed molecular biological research, but whose use in the study of adipose tissue had been elusive.

It's a gene editing technique comprised of an enzyme called Cas9, which can break strands of DNA, and a piece of RNA that guides the Cas9 enzyme to a specific site in the genome for editing. The tool has been successfully used to study heart, liver, neurons, and skin cells, to name a few, but never a certain type of adipose cells known as brown fat.

Using the technique, the team was able to successfully target brown fat, a specialized adipose tissue used to generate heat and protect core body temperature.

Using their adeno-associated virus CRISPR-Cas9 components, they knocked out the UCP1 gene that defines brown adipose and enables it to generate heat, in adult mice. They observed that the knockout mice were able to adapt to the loss of the gene and maintain their body temperature in cold conditions, hinting at other pathways involved in temperature homeostasis.

"The biggest challenge in terms of adipose research to date has been that if you want to study a gene's function, you have to commit a considerable amount of time, resources and money into developing a transgenic mouse," said Romanelli.

The traditional way of developing mouse models involves breeding mice with a desired mutation to delete or introduce certain genes of interest, which can take more than a year and tens of thousands of dollars.

CRISPR-Cas9 has revolutionized this process.

"What we've been able to do is take that whole process and distill it into anywhere from two weeks to a month to generate a transgenic mouse, reducing the cost to less than \$2,000. Not only does it reduce time and cost, it democratizes the research so that any lab that is familiar with molecular biology techniques can adopt this method and do it themselves," said Romanelli.

They were also able to use this method to delete multiple genes simultaneously, a fact that could help researchers better understand important molecular pathways. Though these results are exploratory, the breakthrough represents an important step forward in studying fat.

## 2. The Kunga Was a Status Symbol Long Before the Thoroughbred

Topic in Syllabus : Paper 1 Chapter 9.6 Genetic Engineering evidence



In historical Mesopotamia 4,500 years in the past, lengthy earlier than horses arrived in the area, one other spirited member of the equine household, the kunga, took a starring position in pulling four-wheeled wagons into battle.

Archaeologists had suspected that these animals – depicted in artwork, their gross sales recorded in cuneiform writing, their our bodies typically laid to relaxation in wealthy burial websites – have been the results of some type of crossbreeding. But proof was missing.

a staff of researchers reported on greater than a decade of analysis in the journal *Science Advances*, concluding that research of historical DNA confirmed the kunga was a cross between a feminine donkey (*Equus Africanus asinus*) and a male Syrian wild ass (*Equus hemionus hemippus*).

The kunga is the first identified occasion of a human-engineered hybrid of two species, a manufacturing far past the conventional processes of the domestication of animals, the researchers discovered.

Eva-Maria Geigl, a specialist in historical genomes at the University of Paris, and one in every of the scientists who did the research, mentioned the breeding of kungas was actually “early bioengineering” that developed into a type of historical biotech trade.

Like mules, that are hybrids between horses and donkeys, and which have been created a lot later, the kungas have been sterile. Each new kunga was a one-off, a mating between a wild ass stallion and a donkey.

The stallions needed to be captured and stored in captivity, regardless that they have been extremely aggressive, as trendy data have indicated. Dr. Geigl mentioned that the director of a zoo in Austria, the place the final captive Syrian wild asses died, described them as “livid.” Archaeological data present that a breeding heart in Nagar (now Tell Brak, Syria) shipped the younger kungas to different cities. They have been pricey animals, standing symbols, and have been utilized in warfare and navy ceremonies.

Kungas held their excessive standing for a minimum of 500 years, Dr. Geigl mentioned. Horses didn't seem till round 4,000 years in the past to take their place in battle and ceremony, and to contribute to the creation of different hybrids. Before the present analysis, the oldest identified hybrid was a mule from a web site in Turkey relationship to three,000 years in the past. Members of the same team reported on that find in 2020.

The analysis staff had to deal with the very poor preservation of fossils from desert areas, however used a number of strategies to look at historical DNA. Laurent Frantz, a paleogenomics professional at Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich, who was not concerned in the research, mentioned that regardless of these difficulties, the “outcomes have been very convincing,” displaying that folks “have been experimenting with hybrid equids lengthy earlier than the arrival of the horse.”

Fiona Marshall, an archaeologist at Washington University in St. Louis, who has researched the prehistory of donkeys and their domestication, mentioned the research was “enormously vital” partly as a result of it confirmed that the breeders had clear intentions. The early strategy of domestication was all the time murky — most likely half accident, half human intervention — however this analysis confirmed what the historical Syrians have been after.

“People needed the qualities of a wild animal,” she mentioned. Donkeys might need been tamer than their ancestors, the African wild ass, however the breeders in Mesopotamia needed to again breed to different wild asses for energy and pace – and maybe measurement. Although the final identified residing examples of the Syrian wild ass have been very small, a little greater than three toes at the withers, older animals of the similar species have been bigger.

Dr. Geigl – who collaborated on the analysis with Thierry Grange at the University of Paris, E. Andrew Bennett, now with the Institute of Vertebrate Paleontology and Paleoanthropology in Beijing, Jill Weber at the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology and others – mentioned that the staff sequenced DNA from quite a few sources, together with trendy donkeys, horses and a number of other species of untamed asses, and museum samples.

Of specific significance have been the bones of 44 kungas interred at a wealthy burial web site in Syria known as Umm el-Marra. Those skeletons had earlier led Dr. Weber and others to hypothesize that they were hybrids and that they have been the kungas described in tablets and represented in artwork.

Their tooth confirmed bit marks and indicated that they had been fed a particular eating regimen. The new analysis used DNA from these kungas to check to different species and decide that these animals have been, as suspected, the results of breeding feminine donkeys and male Syrian wild asses.

The analysis staff additionally sequenced DNA from a Syrian wild ass discovered at Gobekli Tepe in Turkey, an 11,000-year-old web site the place people gathered for functions nonetheless being studied, and from two of the final animals of the species, held at a zoo in Vienna.

It is a species that not exists. The kunga can't be recreated, Dr. Bennett mentioned. Donkeys are plentiful, after all, however the final identified Syrian wild asses died in the late Nineteen Twenties. One was shot in the wild and the different died in a zoo in Vienna.

“The recipe for making the kunga was unknown for hundreds of years,” Dr. Bennett mentioned. “And we lastly decode it not even 100 years since one factor has turn into extinct.”



### 3. Emotional Education: An Anthropological Approach

The importance of human adaptation in times of crisis is a must. It is therefore urgent that the state and society in general, develop “emotional education” as a fundamental requirement for personal and social equilibrium.

#### Topic in syllabus : Paper 1 - 9.7 & 9.8

As a social anthropologist, I am concerned with analysing the need and relevance of emotional education for people, from infancy, childhood and adolescence, with the aim of forging their character and personality, as well as cementing ethical and human values, reinforcing resilience or the capacity to face adverse situations.

The struggle for survival and personal fulfilment are activities inherent to every human being, for which, from birth, they have to forge their personality, character, skills and abilities to face social and working life.

At present, Peruvian society is not focusing adequately on the formation of the person, due to the fact that the formal education system gives more relevance to the learning of “knowledge”, “sciences” and “techniques”, to the detriment of emotional learning.

Health is not only the absence of illness, but is a state of holistic well-being that also includes psychological, emotional and social stability.

Most of the so-called “social problems” are the result of traumatic situations within the family, which then lead to psychological trauma, social maladjustment, which then develop into more serious problems such as gangs, addiction to drugs, alcohol and video games (compulsive gambling), behavioural problems, delinquency, organised crime, femicide, corruption of officials.

In order to be sustainable and prevent personal and social problems, it is necessary that the Peruvian state and society as a whole are concerned with developing strategies for the formation of people’s “emotional intelligence”, so that individuals develop “resilience”, i.e., adaptation to adverse or frustrating situations. Only in this way will it be possible to have psychologically stable citizens who contribute positively to personal, family and social development.

Since prehistoric times, society has made demands on individuals in their daily struggle for existence. If the struggle for survival in a hostile environment, in the face of the forces of nature, was the driving force behind human existence, today human beings continue to struggle with the need to survive in an increasingly competitive environment. Achieving the basic needs of food, shelter, clothing, education and training, as well as the need to “be somebody” in life, remain.

However, modern life today is marked by the rise of new technologies, the internet, the speed of communications and the phenomenon of globalisation, the impact of social networks on daily life and now with the coronavirus pandemic that is causing more than five million deaths in the world, generating a permanent state of stress, anxiety and depression, as well as adaptation to the “new normal” and the norms of distance and the use of masks. The negative impact on the economy can be seen in unemployment, low profitability, social crisis, increased crime.

These factors affect the psyche of individuals. As in prehistoric times, those who survive are those who have the best qualities. And we are not only referring to “education”, “academic training”, “professional qualifications”, but also to a fundamental component: personality development and what psychologists call “resilience”, i.e., adaptation to adverse and frustrating situations.

In everyday life we often see cases of people who have had excellent grades at school, as evidenced by passing grades in traditional subjects, diplomas of excellence, but who then have had difficulties in their personal and family life. There are also many cases of young people who graduate from universities with very good grades, but who have failed in their personal lives.

#### **4. First woman reported cured of HIV after stem cell transplant: Study**

Washington, Feb 16 (PTI) A leukaemia patient in the US has become the first woman and the third person to be cured of HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, after receiving a stem cell transplant, according to researchers.

In a presentation at Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections (CROI) in the US on Tuesday, the researchers reported that the woman has had no detectable levels of HIV for 14 months despite cessation of antiretroviral therapy (ART).

Stem cells have the unique ability to develop into specialised cell types in the body.

This is the third known case of HIV remission in an individual who received a stem cell transplant, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) said in statement.

HIV remission resulting from a stem cell transplant had been previously observed in two cases.

The first, a Caucasian male known as the “Berlin patient”, experienced HIV remission for 12 years and was deemed cured of HIV. He died of leukemia in September 2020.

A Latino male called the “London patient” has been in HIV remission for more than 30 months.

This third case suggests that cord stem cell transplantation should be considered to achieve HIV remission and cure for people living with HIV who require such a transplant for other diseases, the study team said in the statement

The research was conducted by the International Maternal Pediatric Adolescent AIDS Clinical Trial Network (IMPAACT) P1107 observational study led by researchers at the University of California Los Angeles, and Johns Hopkins University.

The IMPAACT P1107 study began in 2015 and was designed to describe the outcomes of up to 25 participants living with HIV.

The case described at the meeting involves a woman of mixed race ancestry who had been on ART for HIV infection for four years at the time of her acute myeloid leukemia diagnosis.

She achieved acute myeloid leukemia remission after chemotherapy. Prior to receiving the stem cell transplant, the participant’s HIV was well-controlled but detectable.

In 2017, she received a transplant of cord blood stem cells supplemented with adult donor cells from a relative.

After receiving the stem cell transplant, she engrafted with 100 per cent cord blood cells at day 100 and had no detectable HIV, the researchers said.

At 37 months post-transplant, the patient ceased ART, they said.

According to the study team, no HIV was detected in the participant for 14 months except for a transient detection of trace levels of HIV DNA in the woman's blood cells at 14 weeks after stopping ART. PTI SAR SAR

## **5. Forensic anthropological analysis performed on Baroque-period marble sculpture**

### **Next steps in decoding the artistic process**

"The skull is so detailed that it includes many precise anatomical features that could be examined in the same manner as a real skull. It appears that Bernini used a real biological skull as a model, as he captured details that depicted an adult male of European ancestry," says corresponding author James T. Pokines, associate professor of anatomy and neurobiology at Boston University School of Medicine.

Pokines used standard forensic anthropological techniques as would be done with a biological skull. These include scoring morphological traits for sex and ancestry and performing standard cranial measurements with calipers.

They found the skull is so detailed that it includes many precise anatomical features that could be examined in the same manner as a real skull. Bernini even depicted irregularities common to real skulls such as left/right asymmetry, common variations such as in the shape of a suture and tooth loss both before and after death.

By applying new analytical techniques to art historical objects, Pokines believes we can potentially learn more about the actual artistic means Bernini and other Renaissance and Baroque artists used that are otherwise lost to us. "In particular, it reinforces our understanding of the technical mastery of Bernini and the skill and attention to anatomical detail that it took to produce this work of art," he says.

According to the researchers there are more Renaissance, Baroque and other period skull sculptures to which these analyses could be applied, and in some cases to paintings. "There is another skull that is part of a tomb sculpture in Rome by Bernini or his workshop that we wish to study; it is not as detailed, but we want to see if it is also most consistent with being having been sculpted using

a particular biological skull as a model as opposed to a more generalized skull depiction," adds Pokines.

## **6. Human species who lived 500,000 years ago named as Homo bodoensis**

Species was direct ancestor of early humans in Africa and discovery has led to reassessment of epoch. Researchers have announced the naming of a newly discovered species of human ancestor, Homo bodoensis.

The species lived in Africa about 500,000 years ago, during the Middle Pleistocene age, and was the direct ancestor of modern humans, according to scientists. The name bodoensis derives from a skull found in Bodo D'ar in the Awash River valley of Ethiopia.

Scientists said that the epoch is significant because it was when anatomically contemporary humans, Homo sapiens, appeared in Africa and the Neanderthals, known as Homo neanderthalensis, in Europe.

However, some paleoanthropologists have described this period as "the muddle in the middle" because human evolution during this age is poorly understood.

Dr Mirjana Roksandic, of the University of Winnipeg in Canada and the study's lead author, said: "Talking about human evolution during this time period became impossible due to the lack of proper terminology that acknowledges human geographic variation."

Under the new classification, Homo bodoensis will describe the majority of Middle Pleistocene humans from Africa and some from south-east Europe, while many from the latter continent will be reclassified as Neanderthals.

Christopher Bae, from the department of anthropology at the University of Hawaii at Manoa and one of the co-authors of the study, said the introduction of Homo bodoensis is aimed at "cutting the Gordian knot and allowing us to communicate clearly about this important period in human evolution".

Roksandic concluded: "Naming a new species is a big deal, as the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature allows name changes only under very strictly defined rules.

“We are confident that this one will stick around for a long time, a new taxon name will live only if other researchers use it.”

The findings are published in *Evolutionary Anthropology Issues News and Reviews*. In August, the *Guardian* reported that archaeologists unearthed ancient DNA in the remains of a woman who died 7,200 years ago in Indonesia, a discovery that challenged what was previously known about the migration of early humans.

The remains, belonging to a teenager nicknamed Bessé, were discovered in the Leang Panninge cave on the Indonesian island of Sulawesi. Initial excavations were undertaken in 2015. The discovery, published in the journal *Nature*, is believed to be the first time ancient human DNA has been discovered in Wallacea, the vast chain of islands and atolls in the ocean between mainland Asia and Australia. The DNA was extracted from the petrous part of Bessé’s temporal bone, which houses the inner ear. Researchers said the intact DNA was a rare find.

## SOCIO – CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

### 1. The society where a man is never the boss : The kingdom of women

Topic in syllabus : Paper 1 Chapter 2.3 Marriage and family



It's a place where women rule, marriage doesn't exist and everything follows the maternal bloodline. But is it as good for women as it sounds – and how long can it last?

Imagine a society without fathers; without marriage (or divorce); one in which nuclear families don't exist. Grandmother sits at the head of the table; her sons and daughters live with her, along with the children of those daughters, following the maternal bloodline. Men are little more than studs, sperm donors who inseminate women but have, more often than not, little involvement in their children's upbringing.

This progressive, feminist world – or anachronistic matriarchy, as skewed as any patriarchal society, depending on your viewpoint – exists in a lush valley in Yunnan, south-west China, in the far eastern foothills of the Himalayas. An

ancient tribal community of Tibetan Buddhists called the Mosuo, they live in a surprisingly modern way: women are treated as equal, if not superior, to men; both have as many, or as few, sexual partners as they like, free from judgment; and extended families bring up the children and care for the elderly. But is it as utopian as it seems? And how much longer can it survive?

Choo Waihong set about finding out. A successful corporate lawyer from Singapore, she left her job in 2006 to travel. Having trained and worked in Canada, the US and London, she felt drawn to visit China, the country of her ancestors. After reading about the Mosuo, she decided to take a trip to their picturesque community – a series of villages dotted around a mountain and Lugu Lake – as many tourists do. But something beyond the views and clean air grabbed her.

“I grew up in a world where men are the bosses,” she says. “My father and I fought a lot – he was the quintessential male in an extremely patriarchal Chinese community in Singapore. And I never really belonged at work; the rules were geared towards men, and intuitively understood by them, but not me. I’ve been a feminist all my life, and the Mosuo seemed to place the female at the centre of their society. It was inspiring.”

Warm, curious and quick-witted, Waihong made friends quickly. She discovered that Mosuo children “belong” only to their mothers – their biological fathers live in their own matriarchal family home. Young Mosuo are brought up by their mothers, grandmothers, aunts and uncles.

From the perspective of an outsider – particularly one from China, from where the majority of tourists come – the Mosuo are “condemned” as a society of single mothers, says Waihong. “Children are born out of wedlock, which in China is still unusual. But this isn’t how the Mosuo see it – to them, marriage is an inconceivable concept, and a child is ‘fatherless’ simply because their society pays no heed to fatherhood. The nuclear family as we understand it exists, just in a different form.”

It is common for Mosuo women not to know who the father of their children is, and there is no stigma attached to this

Men and women practise what is known as a “walking marriage” – an elegant term for what are essentially furtive, nocturnal hook-ups with lovers known as “axia”. A man’s hat hung on the door handle of a woman’s quarters is a sign to



other men not to enter. These range from one-night stands to regular encounters that deepen into exclusive, life-long partnerships – and may or may not end in pregnancy. But couples never live together, and no one says, “I do”.

“For Mosuo women, an axia is often a pleasurable digression from the drudgery of everyday life, as well as a potential sperm donor,” says Waihong.

Women own and inherit property, sow crops in this agrarian society, and run the households – cooking, cleaning and child-rearing. The men provide strength, ploughing, building, repairing homes, slaughtering animals and helping with big familial decisions, although the final say is always with Grandmother. Although men have no paternal responsibilities – it is common for women not to know who the father of their children is, and there is no stigma attached to this – they have considerable responsibility as uncles to their sisters’ children. In fact, along with elderly maternal great-uncles, who are often the households’ second-in-charge, younger uncles are the pivotal male influence on children.

“Mosuo men are feminists by any standards,” says Waihong. “Boys think nothing of looking after their baby sisters, or taking their toddler brothers by the hand everywhere. I was once made to wait before talking business with an elderly Mosuo man until he had bathed his family’s twin baby girls and changed their nappies.”

A few months after her first trip, Waihong returned to Lugu Lake. A teenage girl, Ladzu, had offered to teach her the Mosuo language, which is passed down orally, and introduce her to her family. Her visits grew longer and more frequent. She became godmother to Ladzu and her brother, Nongbu. Ladzu’s uncle, Zhaxi, a local character and successful entrepreneur, offered to build her a house. Thus she began to put down roots.

“I grew accustomed to shuttling between Singapore and Lugu Lake, navigating a hectic city life and a different rural rhythm in the mountains,” she says. Her longer stays – she now lives with the Mosuo for a few months, three or four times a year – gave her the chance to discover more about this private, often misunderstood community.

In the absence of marriage as a goal, the only reason for men and women to have anything resembling a relationship is for love, or enjoyment of each other’s company. If it runs its course, the usual reasons for staying together – for the

children, societal or financial reasons – don't apply. As an unmarried woman in a community where marriage is non-existent, Waihong felt at home.

"All Mosuo women are, essentially, single," she says. "But I think I'm seen as an oddity because I'm not from here, and I live alone, rather than with a family. I get a lot of dinner invitations, and my friends are always egging me on to find a nice Mosuo lover." Has she? "That would be telling."

With life centred on the maternal family, motherhood is, unsurprisingly, revered. For a young Mosuo woman, it is life's goal. "I've had to advise many young women on ovulation, so keen are they to get pregnant," she says. "You are seen as complete once you become a mother." In this respect, Waihong, who doesn't have children, is regarded more keenly. "My sense is that I'm pitied," she says, "but people are too polite to tell me."

What happens if a woman doesn't want children? "That's simply not one of their choices. To even ask that question is to see the Mosuo through our eyes, our way of doing things. The question is not pertinent," she says.

And what if they can't have children, or produce only boys? "They will formally adopt a child, either from an unrelated Mosuo family or, more commonly, from one of their maternal cousins," she says. "A few generations ago, before China's one-child policy – which extends to two in rural areas – families were huge. There are a lot of cousins around."

To western eyes, this is the less progressive side of the Mosuo way of life. Is a society that, in many ways, emancipates women from marriage, and gives them sexual freedom, actually producing glorified 1950s housewives who have no choices other than motherhood? It's a frustration that Waihong feels with her goddaughter Ladzu, now 22. "She is a mother, and leads a very domestic life," says Waihong. "For a young Mosuo woman, that's not unusual. But I wish it were different. For me, it's a waste."

But things are changing. Since (mostly) Chinese tourists began arriving in the early 1990s, bringing paved roads, an airport and jobs for Mosuo people, their traditional way of life has started to feel outdated to its young inhabitants. Ladzu and her friends may still be living for motherhood, but she is part of a pioneering generation in transition: she is married, and to a Han Chinese man. She still lives at Lugu Lake, but in her own house, with her husband and son, who was born in February. She is not alone: although her grandmother's generation, in their 60s

and 70s, still practise “walking marriage”, as do many women in their 40s, about half of women in their 30s live with their “partners” – the fathers of their young children. A minority of men and women marry outside the community and move away.

“I know one Mosuo man who is living in [the nearest Chinese city of] Lijiang, married with two children,” says Waihong. “Equally, I know a young Mosuo woman, working as a tour bus driver, who has a child on her own and lives in her mother’s household.”

Education often makes the difference: there is a junior high school at Lugu Lake, but the nearest senior school is 100km away, and few children attend. Even fewer head on to further education. “I know a handful of men and women who have become civil servants or college lecturers,” says Waihong. “But most only have their junior school certificate.”

In many ways, it doesn’t matter to young Mosuo: tourism is providing careers – from waiter to guesthouse owner, tourist guide to taxi driver – until now, a foreign concept. This new rising class has money and the chance to meet people outside the Mosuo community; many families are renting out land for hotels to be built on. Subsistence farming is on the way out, slowly being replaced by the commercial farming of prized local crops. Where land is still farmed for the family, mostly in more rural parts, children head home to help with the harvest. “And they know there will always be food on the table for them, back home with Mum,” says Waihong.

It is a society in transition, in a country that is changing fast. Feminist activism is on the rise in China, battling ongoing discrimination; China still describes unmarried women over 27 as “leftover”. Can these naturally emancipated Mosuo women – and men – show Chinese society a different approach to family life? “Yes,” says Waihong, “to wear their singlehood with pride.”

Young Mosuo are carving out a different path from their parents, embracing “western” marriage and family life with gusto. Zhaxi, who built Waihong’s house, says there will be no Mosuo culture left in 30 years. She is less sure. “I think their traditional family structure may come to be seen as halcyon, once they see what the alternative is,” she says. “They were the original trendsetters, 2,000 years ago; they don’t know how good they have it.

## **2. Fund my studies, I'll get you to Canada – Now Punjabi men are being abandoned by NRI wives**

**Punjabi men abandoned by their NRI wives don't have law or officials on their side. They lose their marriage, money, and Canada dreams.**

**Topic in syllabus : Paper 1 Chapter 2.3 Marriage (Dysfunction of marriage)**

**Negative Impact of globalisation on marriage as an institution**

**Ludhiana/Barnala/Patiala:** At the break of dawn on a hot June morning in Barnala's Gobindpura, a frail, lifeless body of a young man was discovered near the irrigation pump of a wheat farm.

The body was of 24-year-old Lovepreet Singh 'Ladi' who had consumed fertiliser to take his own life. Lovepreet's wife Beant Kaur had not been answering his calls since she moved to Canada on a study visa in 2019, his family says. Abandoned and depressed, he took his life in June 2021.

In immigration-obsessed Punjab, Lovepreet is just one of the many emerging cases in which wives – often after getting funding for their immigration from their spouses – abandon them once they're in a foreign country.



Indian men have been ghosting their wives once they cross international water for decades now. In an answer to a question in Lok Sabha, the Ministry of External Affairs noted in 2019 that 4,698 complaints of distressed wives were received just between January 2016 and May 2019. Now, cases of women doing the same have started surfacing. So much so that there's a hit Punjabi song, '*Tera door ni Canada*', in which an abandoned man sings a ballad for his NRI wife.

### **'Girls should learn a lesson'**

Out of shame, men often don't speak up about being abandoned. However, post-Lovepreet's death, some of them have gotten together to demand justice. Currently, a WhatsApp group made by Lovepreet's uncle has 78 abandoned Punjabi men fighting for their rights. And 35 such abandoned husbands contacted Ludhiana-based NGO ABBNHI (Abandoned Brides by NRI Husbands International) in 2020.

Legal redressal for abandoned husbands is also limited. Neerja V, ADGP NRI Affairs, government of Punjab said, "In India, there's no such law that recognises abandoned husbands. If any husband is indeed abandoned they have to take legal recourse, and their wives may be booked under Section 420 (cheating), in case they've been cheated or section 498 (A) for mental cruelty."

Right to compensation against desertion is also reserved only for women. The Women and Child Development Ministry has a dedicated cell to help wives deserted by their NRI husbands. The Ministry of External Affairs on many occasions in the past has revoked the passports of NRI men who turned their

backs on their wives. Male victims are demanding the same legal recourse be extended to them. Jaswinder Singh, one such victim from Barnala, said, "I want to request the government to deport the women who abandon their spouses. The girls should learn a lesson."

One such abandoned wife has started a petition on Change.org, urging WCD Minister Smriti Irani to pass the marriage registration bill and fast-track pending cases of wife-abandoners. The bill will make it mandatory for NRIs to register their marriage within 30 days of getting married or get their passports impounded.

Pargat Singh, Punjab's incumbent minister for NRI Affairs, said that he strongly feels for men who are abandoned and will work for their benefit if voted to power again.

"The dowry act, in my opinion, needs to be amended for modern times. Nowadays, men are also at the receiving end of deception and their interests need to be protected. I feel strongly for men who are abandoned and if I hold the portfolio, I will definitely do my best to work in their interest."

There's friction between men and women at times on who the real 'victim' of NRI weddings is. "When we started taking cases of men, women protested. Men and women would often fight on our WhatsApp group on who is the real victim of this fraud. We had to later make separate groups," Satwinder Kaur Satti, founder of ABBNHI said.

However, she adds it's easier for men to get on with their lives than women. "There's initial embarrassment, but men spend the rest of their lives with their friends and get on with it. It's easier for them to remarry, most of them are young and don't have to take care of kids. Women are generally abandoned by their husbands along with a kid and spend a lonely, isolated life. They're not widows, but their status in the society is not worse than them," Satti added.

This has also resulted in the vilification of women. While they've been deserted by NRI men for decades, many in villages carry the sentiment that it's only the *munde* who are the real victims.

## INDIAN & TRIBAL ANTHROPOLOGY

### 1. 'Pathshalas' making change in tribals' life



'Pathshala Change Makers' appointed by the government offer handholding to children, creating interest in reading and writing.

Amid lockdown, when schools and other educational institutions are closed, the children of Primary Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG) in Jharkhand continue with their learning with the help of the 'Pathshala Change Makers' (PCM) appointed by the state government.

The Pathshala Change Makers offer handholding to the community in their day-to-day engagements. The objective of the initiative is to generate interest and inculcate a habit of reading and writing among the Primary Vulnerable Tribal Groups children for strengthening their basic education by the time they get school enrollment.

As many as 140 PVTG Pathshalas run in the most deprived geographic areas of 10 districts of the tribal-dominated state – Pakur, Dumka, Deoghar, Godda, Garhwa, Latehar, Palamu, Gumla, Saraikela and East Singhbhum, under the Udaan project, benefiting nearly 3,000 PVTG children.

The enrollment process of these children continues, with a target of around 100 more PVTG Pathshalas this year. There are around 73,000 PVTG households living in extreme poverty. These groups have their own social and cultural identity with most of them living in remote forest areas. They depend on forest-based livelihood, hunting and livestock rearing and non-timber forest produce.

As per the 2011 census data, the literacy rate among PVTGs in Jharkhand is a poor 39.28 per cent, which is around half of the state literacy rate. Most PVTG children in Jharkhand lack basic and primary education.

To combat the situation amid the Covid-19 pandemic, the Jharkhand State Livelihood Promotion Society (JSLPS) started an intervention plan – 'PVTG Pathshala' under the special project Udaan – a comprehensive and sustainable development of PVTGs in the year 2020. JSLPS CEO Nancy Sahay said a small education kit, which includes basic learning materials like chalk, slates, pencils, erasers, notebooks, sharpeners, storybooks, etc are provided to the children under the Udaan project.

"I have been running a PVTG Pathshala under which children who don't have any other place to start their education process, are given basic and primary education for the last three months," said PCM Naresh Parahiya.

He has been conducting a Pathshala for 21 children at a remote village Rangya under Manatu block of Palamu district, enabling them to enhance their knowledge through peer learning, he said.



To make it more effective, these Change Makers are appointed from their own community so that the children could identify themselves with them, he said.

“Other than teaching, the Pathshala Change Makers are also involved in creating largescale awareness among children’s parents for whom education is never a priority for their kids,” said Naresh.

Sunita Devi, a young mother says her son has been attending the Pathshala for three months. Being unlettered, she was worried about the future of her son as all the schools are closed due to the Covid-mandated lockdown, and she was not able to admit him to any school.

“Then I got to know about the Pathshaala. I decided to send my son there,” said Sunita Devi. Now, her son has started identifying Hindi and English language letters, besides counting, she says. Sunita lives in the village with her son while her husband works in Rajasthan.

## **2. Mulugu: Tribal welfare, a myth**

### **Topic in the Syllabus : Paper 2 - ITDA**

Mulugu: Notwithstanding several legislations in force meant for transforming the lives of Adivasis, they remain a far cry to the targeted primitive groups. The Hans India spoke to several Adivasis and their leaders to elicit information about their development. The bitter truth is that... All is not well in the Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA), Eturnagaram. The ITDA just exists for namesake and nothing more than that. What they divulged was a bitter truth.

"Apparently, the ITDA is short-staffed. But that question doesn't arise when the ITDA was starving for funds to carry developmental programmes such as economic support scheme, Giri Vikas etc.," Adivasi Sankshema Parishad national president Datla Nageshwar Rao said. On the other hand, the Adivasis are up in arms against the forest and revenue officials with the government yet to take measures to resolve the land disputes.

The forest department has blithe concern for the Scheduled Tribes & Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (RoFR) Act, 2006. They don't even care the pattas that some of the Adivasis have. As a result, not all the farmers in the region were

getting Rythu Bandhu benefits. In the name of assigned or forest land, the officials deny Rythu Bandhu, Rao said. It's learnt that more than Rythu Bandhu assistance was stopped to more than 4,200 farmers for various reasons.

The locals who agreed healthcare services are somewhat better say that there was no supervision on education. The bankers were not supportive to the economic support scheme (ESS). It's learnt that more than 3,000 applications under ESS are pending with the administration for more than one year. The government is yet to appoint a Project Officer (PO) to the Eturnagaram ITDA since it transferred Hanumant Kondiba Zendage on August 10, 2021. As of now, the ITDA is under the in-charge of Mulugu District Collector S Krishna Aditya.

The absence of PO has its impact on work progress as the government had released funds under the head of Tribal Welfare Department. It's been more than two years since the last governing body meeting of the ITDA was held. In fact, the governing body needs to review the progress of the developmental programmes in its command area once in every three months. Adivasi Sankshema Parishad State Coordinator Madivi Nehru said, "The state of affairs in all the ITDAs are same in the two Telugu-speaking States - Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. The fate of the Adivasis is at the mercy of the governments."

### 3. Visakhapatnam: Eco-friendly crafts of tribals catch eyeballs



The hand-woven and eco-friendly crafts of the tribals from various Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA) limits draw the attention of the denizens. As

a part of the Tribal Pride Day/National Tribal Day celebrations, the counters dotting the Beach Road bring out the skills of the tribals from across the State. Tribals from the ITDAs of Seethammapeta, Paderu, Rampachodavaram, KR Puram, Nellore and Srisailam have put up their crafts in 25 counters spread across the venue.

Squatting on the floor, a team of tribals weave bamboo baskets with dexterity, while the Savara tribes settle to bring out the essence of tribal art through their paintings. These apart, the earth-friendly teacups, decorative items, accessories, tribal art and home decors made of wrought iron, paintings and bamboo holders for earthen lamps, among others attract the attention of the visitors at the venue.

Exhibiting jute bags, P Parameswari from Nellore says, "It has been two years since I took training for making the jute bags. We design the bags at home and display them at fairs such as these. In recent years, the demand for eco-friendly and organic products have soared. With the support of the department, we would like to set up a venture and train people in the skill that I am adept at." Sharing the response of the fair, Professor of the Tribal Cultural Research and Training Mission (TCRTM), Department of Tribal Welfare, Andhra Pradesh Nookarapu Srinivasa, says, "The response for the tribal wares is quite overwhelming. And most of the products exhibited by the tribals got exhausted by now. After browsing through the stalls, visitors arriving here request us to extend the fair."

Also, there is state-level tribal drawing and art contest scheduled on November 22 for the tribal artists across the State, says N Sitaramaiah of TCRTM. Visitors can browse through the products put up at the fair organised in collaboration with ITDAs, GCC and TRIFED and Tribal Handicrafts Societies on the Beach Road from 10 am to 10 pm till November 19. Along with enhancing their source of income, the platform aids in bringing various crafts of the tribals under an umbrella and help them hone their marketing skills.

#### **4. Tribals and their divinity concept**



### **The Sanatana Dharma has ingredients of tribal worship**

Let us examine the theory of naming a few people as tribals by sociologists and others. The western media under the influence of Christianity has been for decades trying to declare tribals as indigenous people. The connotation of 'indigenous' in terms of the great Indian civilization, which grew with great saints who lived in sylvan surroundings in thick forests, is a travesty of truth. It is an insult to ancient Indian culture to call the tribals as indigenous or, for that matter, calling them tribal at all.

For, the tribal traditions have great history of language, music, art, paintings, medicine and of course worship of nature in its different form which enriched the Sanatana Dharma and traditions. In fact, all Indians must have been once part of some tribe or the other and it is the lop-sided modern development which now differentiates between tribal and non-tribal people. Unfortunately, our constitution is also trapped in the tribal and non-tribal verbosity. The raging debate that tribals have no set pattern of religion is basically a politically motivated and foreign-supported propaganda being launched in India by different churches that believe in proselytization.

The Sanatana Dharma which is now known as Hinduism has all the ingredients of tribal worship. In tribal areas most of the divinity is dominated by nature worships and many tenets and festivities of Hinduism are drawn from them. The argument by a few politicians that tribal people never had an organized religion does not hold water if we see the history of the country. The first organised census was held in 1871 - the first synchronized census was held in 1881 – in

which the 95 percent tribal people have entered their religion as Hinduism. Only two percent people from the North-East declared a tribal religion because of the interpretational bias during census. In 1891 only three percent were shown as following tribal religion and rest as Hindu.

In 1891 census information on sects of Christianity was also collected. In the first census after independence in 1951, 97-98 percent tribals had shown Hinduism as their religion. It only after several decades later when the Christian missionaries started converting the tribals in central and eastern India that nature worship was systematically sought to be separated from Hinduism. In Tripura the Tripuri, Jamatias and other Tribes have been worshipping Shiva as depicted in the rock carvings.

Similarly, Sarna method of divinity is focused on the worship of nature and spirits and holds all natural objects to be sacred. This belief system is followed by several tribal groups in Jharkhand and neighbouring states, and it is fully reflected in their social and cultural life. The 'other' category for religion in the census after independence had created this confusion because of the census staff relegating such tribal beliefs as the 'other'. There is a well-orchestrated propaganda launched by a few political leaders for supremacy in the tribal belt aided and abetted by Christian missionaries and the naxalites to disconnect the tribal population from the larger part of Sanatana dharma.

This writer during February 2021 has visited a tribal area in Jabalpur district of Madhya Pradesh. In a corner of the fair, a person who spoke fluent English was selling books deriding Hinduism and recommending a book, 'Tribals are not Hindu'. I had to admonish the organizer, a foreign-funded NGO, for creating such a situation in the tribal belt. The issue today is not to interfere with religious beliefs and cultural lives of tribal people. The focus should be to bringing them to the mainstream by providing them best health, educational and livelihood and preserve their art, language, culture, and music.

## **5. The Man Who Took Gond Art From Tribal Huts to The World's Top Museums**





Gond artist Jangarh Singh Shyam went from drawing on the walls of tribal huts to his art being displayed in prestigious museums. Today, his legacy is carried forward by his family.

An image of Lord Hanuman was drawn with lime and charcoal by hand on the humble red mud walls of a small hut in the remote village, Patangarh, of Dindori district of Madhya Pradesh in 1981. The artist was 17-year-old Gond Pradhan boy Jangarh Singh Shyam. The simplicity, the clean lines and the innocence of the figure helped catapult the hitherto confined Gond tribal art and the artist onto the national and international art circuit.

That was the year when the government of Madhya Pradesh planned to build a multi-purpose art centre, Bharat Bhavan, in its capital city Bhopal. Contemporary and well-known artist Jagdish Swaminathan was given the responsibility of establishing the centre where both urban and rural (folk and tribal) arts could be displayed. While scouring the villages of MP for tribal art, he saw the drawing of Lord Hanuman on the walls of a tribal home. That's when he discovered the uninfluenced talent of Jangarh Shyam and brought him to Bhopal with the promise of work in the field he loved.

Thus began the saga of Gond art coming out of villages to the mainstream.

Swaminathan took it upon himself to introduce the young Jangarh to canvas and acrylic paints. The rest as they say is history. Without losing touch with his tribal

roots or focus, the highly gifted boy soon learnt the new medium. His work, from being displayed on the walls of tribal huts, buffalo backs or *kuccha* roads, received a new stage in the galleries of Japan, the UK, Germany, France and the USA.

**Unknowingly Jangarh became the pioneer of modern-day Gond art and paved the way for others from his village to find a new source of livelihood.**

“My father was so passionate about drawing that he would draw with whatever he could get on buffalo backs when he took them out to graze in the forest of our village. The striking white lines on the black buffalo was much appreciated by the villagers,” recalls 35-year-old, Bhopal-based Mayank Singh Shyam, talking about his late father Jangarh. Barely 13 at the time of his father’s death, today Mayank along with his mother Nankusia Bai and sister Japani, are continuing the legacy of Jangarh Kalam, school of Gond art.

Explaining the tribal tradition of naming the child on some event happening around the birthday, Mayank says, “Our father was based in Japan when she was born and so she was named Japani. It was a full moon day when I was born and so I was named Mayank, which means the moon.”

Japani laughingly admits that as a child she hated her name as in the school it amused everyone and classmates used to pull her leg a lot. Even today many are bewildered at her name. But now she is happy with the uniqueness of it.

“Since childhood, we would sit next to our father and observe his style of work, techniques to wield paintbrushes and selection of particular brushes to use for different strokes. He would ask us to paint whatever we wanted on any piece of paper we could lay our hands-on,” remembers 32-year-old Japani, whose works are exhibited all over the world.

Though she hasn’t yet travelled abroad, she still gets queries and visitors from France, Germany and Japan to her home in Bhopal to either buy her work or to discuss Gond art.

One of Mayank’s works was even auctioned by Sotheby’s in the Indian Contemporary Art auction at New York, organised for the benefit of the Kolkata Museum of Modern Art. The first Gond art auctioned way back in 1988 was of course that of the torchbearer Jangarh Shyam.

Both the siblings have developed their style of painting though there certainly is a shadow of their father's imagery in their work. Mayank uses a completely white background to paint with black whereas Japni uses white paint to draw on black background. Like many Gond artists, they too paint flora, fauna but with a story behind each of their figures.

The history of Gond art can be traced to the 14th or 15th century when the first Gond kingdom was traced to the central hilly regions of India. Today, the Gond tribals mainly reside in Madhya Pradesh and small pockets of its neighbouring states of Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Odisha and Bihar.

Like other tribals and Adivasis (Warli, Bhil, Saura etc.), even Gonds decorate their homes especially the outer walls and the courtyards of their huts with drawings using charcoal, vegetable and mineral dyes, coloured mud, etc. Flora and fauna from the main figures.

## **6. Digital Anthropology is key for successful digital transformation**





Exploring the various aspects of anthropology is a crucial step forward in dealing with any kind of human-centred problem. Anthropology, in its most basic definition, refers to the study of human cultures and societies, both past and present. Digital Anthropology is a relatively new field within anthropology that came into existence less than a decade ago, but it holds the answer to tackling human-centred problems.

Digital anthropology is the anthropological study of the relationship between humans and digital-era technology. While most cynics debate that Digital Transformation (DT) deteriorates humanity due to immaterial and inauthentic nature, Raktim Singh, a renowned digital thought leader, believes the opposite way. He says digitalization actually extends humanity and the definition of what it means to be a human.

### **Holistic digital transformation**

Raktim strongly believes that Digital Anthropology is the key to successful digital transformation. Read on to get clarity on this thought leader's take on Digital Anthropology and what it takes for holistic digital transformation in any organization.

According to him, a business can't see success by delegating DT to a single team in a company. Rather, the whole organization has to undergo a holistic transformation. Having an agile mindset (and not doing agile) & creating a learning organization (and not scheduling some academic courses) is key here. We still have to unleash the power of DT. You can't treat this as a 'Keeping the lights on' type of initiative.

Digital Transformation has four aspects:

Understanding digital experience, which refers to reading a book or watching movies, at any point in time, on any device, anywhere

Solving the WISE (Know your Why, Integration with the external world, Removing Silos, Changing the Environment & Culture)

Apply ACID formula (Artificial Intelligence, Cloud, Internet of things, Data)

Developing an Agile Mindset, creating a learning organization & understanding the sub-conscious mind. Along with this, you need to understand digital anthropology.

The last point is very important. Due to lack of proper understanding, many companies have started claiming that they are 'Doing Agile' & they are a 'Learning & training' department.

But what is required is totally different. Many people have confused 'Agility' to 'delivering continuously'. You need to have an Agile mindset so that you can handle 'change management' effectively, which your customer is asking for in the ever-changing world.

On similar lines, just arranging training courses or making those courses available on online channels is not sufficient. You need to understand the mental models of all your stakeholders (customer, partner & your team member). Each individual carries a mental bias, which got formed over a while.

Unless you understand these, collaboration among all stakeholders is not possible. Each new suggestion will be treated as 'But this is not applicable to me/ We had always done like that in past.'

### **Understanding Digital Anthropology: Raktim's perspective**

You need to understand Digital anthropology (DA). DA is the anthropological study of the relationship between humans and digital-era technology.

Before electricity was invented, there was no concept of nightlife. We couldn't have imagined a city like Las Vegas. Similarly, after cars & telephones were invented, the human race evolved to travel long distances. Now we are comfortable with taking up jobs at places, which are far away from our hometown. After computers came, all work related to data calculation & automation became very easy. All these disruptions had helped the human race to evolve to the next level.

Raktim's belief is that post digital transformation, the human race will further evolve. Businesses will be able to offer a personalized experience to each individual. It can be a personalized medicine for a patient or personalized care for elderly parents.

We, humans, have a conscious & subconscious mind. When you are in love, listen to music or take drugs, you start doing 'special things', as your subconscious mind takes over during such times. FAAAN (Facebook, Amazon, Apple, Alphabet, Netflix) companies have already started implementing this

concept. Based on your previous movie-watching habits, you now see a list of movies, which are totally personalized for you.

We all are in the habit of taking selfie & immediately posting it on social media. Our sub-conscious mind forces us to keep on checking the likes & comments on our social media posts. So, in a way, with digitalization, we are forming new habits.

We don't memorize various historical events & dates. We just 'Google' it. We take the help of smartphones/machines in our day-to-day life. We use UBER, order food on smartphones, wear smartwatch to keep track of our health.

The young members of your team expect a similar experience at the workplace, which FAAN companies provide in their personal life. On a similar note, your customer is also looking for hyper-personalized experience & instant gratification. He is not ready to accept the things the way it was delivered earlier.

Senior management has to unlearn the old practices & remove the old deep-rooted beliefs. You can't run the organization by 'Control & command' mode. You have to create an environment, where team members can come with new ideas & execute. There will be failures, but don't get affected by these failures. Create a culture, where team members can 'Fail Fast, Learn Fast & Scale Fast'.

Going forward, many works will be done by machines. But machines don't have a subconscious mind. So, Raktim visualizes a future, where humans, with their sub-conscious mind & machine, will create a better world. The last trillion-dollar industry was built on a code of 1s and 0s. The next will be built, by getting insights from our genetic code.

## **7. Lessons On Sustainability From Marginalised Tribal Communities**



The systematic methods of locality drainage systems, crop rotational farming, rainwater harvesting, usage of earthen utensils and other rational methods have been practised in every tribal household for thousands of years. They have only conveniently, yet, sustainably updated themselves without causing much harm to the world's ecological balance. For several years, tribal communities of the country have co-lived and protected nature and it is high time the world takes note of sustainability from them.

The Santhals of West Bengal, Odisha, Jharkhand, Chattisgarh; the Garo Khasi tribes of North East India; the Kamar tribe of Madhya Pradesh; the Kadar, Karumba tribes of Kerala and Tamil Nadu have all left a steady trail of reference of how-to-live in peace with nature dexterously. Santhals, till date, use earthen utensils, live in mud huts which are cooler than concrete houses, are pantheists and have nature involved in every minute cultural expression, from their dance to marriages.

They use organic elements like fresh flowers and leaves to adorn themselves with. "We hold nature at the highest, our life revolves around trees, crops; our festivals, religion everything is related to nature; we cannot dare to harm it," said Shefali Hasda, a dancer from Bolpur, from the Santhal Community. Ethnic groups in northeastern states have incorporated methods of farming, infrastructure building, re-using of resources in the most effective way rotation and step farming methods prevent soil erosion and degradation. They reuse residues of wasted crops as dry ingredients for earthen ovens, which is a financially feasible option, especially in poorer areas.

Tribal communities in central India use hay to construct houses, shacks which are easily degradable. They also have effective ways of rainwater harvesting, especially during dry seasons. Communities in southern India use banana leaves very commonly for cooking and other household purposes. This usage of banana leaves is now gaining popularity in northern states as well, especially during occasions for feeding guests.

"Wedding business in our country is undeniably a capitalist concept and we as planners are glad that some couples are aiming for sustainable décor, not just sourcing locally but employing locally as well," said a wedding planner from Durgapur. The country faces multiple ecological problems at the moment, be it the breaking up of the Nanda Devi Glacier in Uttarakhand's Chamoli district or the earthquakes happening spasmodically; what the country needs right now is an extensive understanding and usage of alternatives in the most sustainable way possible. The awareness of living a more conscious, kind and greener life is what the world needs right now.

### **8. Nature-Loving Tribe That Fought To Save Their Sacred Peak & Succeeded!**

The Dongrias have been known for their eco-friendly agriculture-based lifestyle. But now they are slowly dying. Ritayan Mukherjee, a photographer, reports.



When I first heard about the Dongrias, it was way back in 2013. Their successful fight against a UK-based mining giant to save their sacred mountain caught the



attention of newspapers. Their movement inspired me, and I wanted to photograph their traditional lifestyle, but unfortunately could not develop a source to reach them. When I finally had the opportunity to visit their villages this year in March, I made the most of it.

Dongria Kondh, a tribe that lives in the dense forests of Niyamgiri Hills, is spread across Rayagada and Kalahandi districts of southwestern Odisha.

Niyamgiri Hills is not only a sacred mountain to the Dongrias, but it also plays a major role in the region's ecology. The Dongrias have earned the status of PVTG (Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group) from the Government of India. That's because they still have a primitive lifestyle, geographically isolated from others and shy, as a result. They are more educationally and economically backward than other tribal groups in the country. There 75 such PVTGs in India.



My journey to Lakhpadar village in Niyamgiri Hills, with a friend, began from Dhamteri, Chhattisgarh. We drove 230 km and reached Bhawanipatna, the district headquarters of Kalahandi district. We then continued our drive to Langigargh village, at the foothills of Niyamgiri.

Langigargh has been the centre point of conflict for long, as the UK-based mining giant tried to set up a plant here. Bauxite mining too was about to start but it got cancelled eventually due to the landmark verdict from the Supreme Court of India.

From Langigargh to Lakhpadar village, is a journey of 15 km. We travelled by car for the first seven, but the tricky potholes and thorny stems caused me to give up. I walked the remainder of the way, stopping many times to watch the beautiful vistas to Niyamgiri. Finally, after a 45-minute walk, I made it to the village.

Lakhpadar is important among the Dongrias. Not only did the movement start from here, the leader of the Dongrias, Lodo Sikoka, lives here.

**The face of the Dongria movement, he is a knowledgeable man. He has been attacked by the administration as well as by the Company goons.**

Lakhpadar is a small village, where around 30 families live. The Dongrias speak the Kui language. During my walk, I spotted numerous streams surrounding the villages. These streams are the lifelines of the community.

Lodo Sikoka stated, "One of the major reasons we have opposed bauxite mining in the Niyamgiri Mountains was that it would destroy our numerous perennial hill streams. Our farming and daily livelihoods depend on these streams."

During my time there, I was able to observe some things about the lives of the Dongria people.

**Fermented liquor, made from the sap of palm trees is often used during rituals as well as for regular consumption in daily life. It is called "Salpa".**

A palm tree is one of the seven trees, considered as a 'must' in the Dongria Kondh's sacred grove. I learnt that every family owns multiple palm trees, where even a father-son duo has separate palm trees.

Lakhpadar village is powered by solar energy. A villager, Dasharu, told me, "This is the only change that the state government has brought to our village."

In Dongria society, women play a role equal to the men. They take part in almost every activity. They farm and sell the agricultural produce in the weekly markets. They are also dominant in issues such as family management. As per Dongria tradition, the man has to pay the bride price (dowry).

**The Dongrias practice shifting cultivation, growing different types of lentils.**

They also produce Banana, Jack-fruit, Orange, Ginger, Turmeric, Lemon, and Mango. Dongrias also collect flowers, fruits, tubers, leaves, stems, seeds, wild mushrooms, tamarind, and bamboo shoots from the forest. Dongria men also hunt for rabbits, squirrels, and edible insects.

The nearest school from Lakhpadar village is 15 km away. Kids can't go that far through the dense jungle. So they want schools in their villages, with Dongria Kondh teachers using Kui language, and with the incorporation of field-based learning.

During my stay, another thing I noticed was their degrading health conditions. They have almost no medical facilities. Malaria is prevalent, often leading to death. In the absence of facilities, the Dongrias trust their village doctor, who uses herbs and plants as remedies. They do not go to the hospital located in Langigargh town, set up by the British mining company.

During the evenings, villagers gather and dance. For centuries, the Dongrias lived an isolated life. Their only form of entertainment has been their traditional form of dancing.

Though the Dongrias succeeded in saving their mountain and therefore their heritage, for the time being, their situation largely remained unchanged. For centuries, they have been known for their eco-friendly agriculture-based lifestyle. But now they are slowly dying. Despite the PVTG (Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups ) status, they lead a very underprivileged existence. They lack access to schools, basic medical facilities or proper rationing system.

Although I went to document their daily lives, I came back with a different perspective.

## **9. Enlarge the Panchsheel approach to tribal upliftment**

**Topic in syllabus : Paper 2 - 6.2 problems of the tribal communities**





Globalization and industrialization have uprooted villages, disrupted ancient cultures and forced Tribals to give up their traditional occupations. Many have become migrant wage workers in unorganized-sector units, living one meal at a time. Unbridled interaction between tribes and the general population has resulted in indigenous cultures being suppressed. Yet, a largely ameliorative approach of isolation amounts to the promotion of primitivism. The marginalization of Tribals can be traced back to the British Raj, when the state had a free hand in controlling estates and forest resources. However, it continued in Independent India as mass tribal land acquisitions in the name of 'developmental projects'. The difficulties that Tribals face have failed to become part of the public discourse. Jawaharlal Nehru had advocated 'Panchsheel' for Tribal development to address issues of Tribal justice.

Panchsheel advocates non-imposition by encouraging self-governance. It affirms that the forest and land rights of Tribals must be protected. Further, it encourages inclusion of Tribals in administration and development. It also mandates that schemes and administrative policies meant for Tribal beneficiaries should not be cumbersome. Lastly, it requires that progress criteria for Tribals be based on life-quality indices, with an aim to strike a balance between isolationism and their assimilation. This is based on a dual approach of integration and development.

The Indian Constitution entails provisions for the administration and control of Scheduled Areas and Schedule Tribes (STs) under Part-10. Tribal advisory councils are mandatorily constituted to inculcate local self-governance, the cornerstone of democracy. Articles 330 & 332 of the Constitution reserve seats for

STs in Scheduled areas, thus granting them representation to safeguard their rights and interests. This applies both at the national and grassroots level. Additionally, welfare departments have been instituted in states with considerable Tribal populations to work for the furtherance of their rights. The 89th Amendment introduced the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes that derives its power from Article 338A, which is handled by panellists from Tribal communities. It is relevant to mention that the Panchayats (Extension of Scheduled Areas) Act of 1995, or PESA, confers upon village gram sabhas the powers of development and dispute resolution (as per traditional customs), as also the ownership and management of natural resources under local Tribal communities.

Government panels and commissions have also put forth various recommendations. The Kaka Kalelkar Commission of 1953 was the first to suggest the recognition of STs as an exclusive group of no certain religion. Further, the Elwin panel of 1959, United Nations Debar Commission of 1960, Lokur Committee of 1965 and Shilu Ao panel of 1966 focused largely on tribal development, governance mechanisms and welfare systems. It was the Bhuria Committee Report of 1991 that paved the way for PESA's enactment, which, with its objective of democratic decentralization, further fortified Tribal interests. The Bandhopadhyay and Mungekar Committee was constituted to examine governance issues in Scheduled areas affected by extremism. Finally, in 2014, the Xaxa panel was constituted to look extensively into Tribal livelihood, employment, health, migration and legal matters. It noted that PESA and the Forest Rights Act (FRA) of 2006, even though significant initiatives, are slow to absorb evolving circumstances.

The Supreme Court in *Samatha vs State of Andhra Pradesh* (1997) held that the granting of a mining lease in a Scheduled area by a state amounts to a transfer of land to a 'non-Tribal' in violation of the Fifth Schedule. Again, in 2013, the court in *Orissa Mining Corporation vs. Ministry of Environment and Forests* held that forest dwellers and STs have a right under the FRA to be consulted before their ancient homelands are converted to commercial lands. The judiciary can thus be seen as the torch bearer of Tribal rights in its role as Panchsheel-enforcer.

The renewed Stand Up India scheme, 2021, launched by Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI), seeks to provide STs loans ranging from ₹10 lakh to ₹1 crore to set up enterprises. It opens up opportunities for development while preserving their space and independence. The Union Budget for 2021-22 reduced the margin-money requirement for loans from 25% to 15% and allowed

credit for agriculture-allied activities. A recent proposal to build 750 Eklavya Model Residential Schools in Tribal-majority areas to inculcate heritage-based education, while also imparting vocational-skill training, is another manifestation of a dual-approach policy.

Nearly three-quarters of a century after independence, several policies and constitutional safeguards, fortified by statutes and judicial pronouncements, are now in place. But the situation, unfortunately, is far from ideal. India has not ratified the International Labour Organization's 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples, which recognizes Tribal rights over land and natural resources. This ratification would assert India's choice to assimilate Tribals while respecting their social and cultural autonomy. The potential of a pragmatic action plan in consonance with Panchsheel is yet to be fulfilled. The crevice between policy and performance seems to widen over time, while inclusion without intrusion remains a challenge to be addressed.

#### 10. Government urged to reserve 100% jobs for tribals in Agency areas



The **Tribal Advisory Council (TAC)** which met here on Friday with Deputy Chief Minister Pamula Pushpasreevani in the chair, appealed to the State government to bring a regulation under the 5th Schedule of the Constitution for reserving cent per cent jobs in the agency area to the Girijans. The TAC would bring the issue to the notice of Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy. The

council also resolved to expedite the preparation of the new list including the new villages in the scheduled areas. It was also decided to develop 517 villages as part of the Adarsh Villages scheme announced by the Centre.

All the **ITDAs** were directed to submit afresh the list of villages to be included in the scheduled area. Some ITDAs had already submitted the new lists and the rest of the ITDAs were directed to expedite the preparation of the new lists. The TAC said that the number of new villages to be included in the scheduled area would be around 554. Under the Adarsh Villages scheme, 517 villages with less than population of 500 with more than 50 per cent scheduled tribal population were selected for development. The Centre would grant Rs 20 lakh for each village and the matching grant would be included from the ST Sub Plan for developing these villages.

The **Tribal Advisory Council** appealed to the government to allot minor mineral mines to the tribals only or tribal associations as per the agency rules and regulations. While implementing the New Education Policy, the government should take into consideration the opinion of the local people's representatives and not a single school should be closed on any pretext, the TAC suggested. The TAC expressed concern over the highhanded behaviour of the Odisha officials in the border villages and it has been decided to take the issue to the notice of the Supreme Court through the Chief Secretary.

The TAC decided to meet once again to discuss on the issue of providing equal property rights to Adivasi women. The Deputy Chief Minister thanked the Chief Minister for forming the Tribal Advisory Council in the larger interest of the tribal population.

**Tribal Advisory Council** - The Tribes Advisory Councils have been constituted in the Scheduled Areas States i.e. Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha and Rajasthan and non Scheduled Areas States of Tamil Nadu and West Bengal. The directions of the Hon'ble President have been conveyed to the State Government of Uttarakhand for constitution of Tribes Advisory Council in the State.

With regard to the Tribes Advisory Council, the Para 4 (1) of the Fifth Schedule to the Constitution envisages that "There shall be established in each State having Scheduled Areas therein and, if the President so directs, also in any State having Scheduled Tribes but not Scheduled Areas therein. In terms of clause (2)

of Para 4 of the Fifth Schedule, it shall be the duty of the Tribes Advisory Council to advise on such matters pertaining to the welfare and advancement of the Scheduled Tribes in the State as may be referred to them by the Governor.

### 11. Indigenous Baiga women in India: "Our story should be heard"



Despite the harassment from Forest Department guards, who tried to prevent the

Fulwaripara village to submit their claims for recognition of their land under the Forest Rights Act, the village managed to do so. Yet, their claim was not completed. Now, they face again the threat of eviction.

“This forest is our mother. We have territorial rights”.

This sentence is written on boards that women from the Fulwaripara village raised across their land. They are declaring to the government and other relevant actors that the forest they depend on belongs to them. The Indian Forest Department keeps denying this. Its guards have destroyed the boards many times – even though some were made of concrete, and many times the women raised them again. Because of this, ten women have been put into jail in the last two years.

Fulwaripara is located in the Chattisgarh state, central India, where many communities live with the forests and face threats of eviction due to conservation units, like tiger reserves, which are often linked with destructive projects, like mining. **The NGOs WWF and the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) support the Indian Forest Department in this region, providing training, patrol resources, vehicles and other equipment to the foresters who are conducting the evictions. (1)**

After having faced many evictions over the last two centuries within their own territory, a dam displaced them once again 40 years ago. They ended up living in Fulwaripara, at the edge of the Achanakmar Tiger Reserve.

The Forest Rights Act was approved in India in 2006; it is a historic law that recognizes the rights of forest dependent peoples to their territories (2). Since then, **the Fulwaripara village has faced all kinds of harassment from the Forest Department guards, who tried to prevent them to submit their claims for recognition of their tribal land under the Forest Rights Act.**

But the guards could not stop them. To inform the Forest Department officials and guards about the submission of their claim under the Forest Rights Act, the women wrote the claim number on the boards in their fields. However, a recent Supreme Court decision could order that the communities that have their claims under the Forest Rights Act rejected might face eviction. **As a result of a petition made by a handful of conservation NGOs, including the Wildlife Trust of India, the Nature Conservation Society, the Tiger Research and Conservation Trust and the Bombay Natural History Society, together with retired forest officers, the Supreme Court could order the eviction of more than one million**



**forest dependent people from their land.** (3) Fulwaripara's claim was not allowed to be completed; like more than 50 per cent of the rejected cases. (4) In consequence, **Fulwaripara faces the threat of eviction, once again.**

In the Fulwaripara village, **women have always been at the frontline of the struggle.** When asked why, they simply answered: "men are afraid to do so". They are part of an indigenous Baiga community that continues to practise the traditional use of controlled burning to grow their crops, under what they call the "Bewar system", a type of shifting agriculture. **Bewar is heavily criminalized by the government and conservationists.**

### The History of Our Settlement



Under Clause (i), Section 3 of Forest Rights Act 2006. COMMUNITY FOREST RESOURCE. Claimant: President, Forest Rights Committee Village: Fulbaripara (meaning: the house where flowers live - ful is flower and bari is house) Village Panchayat (self-local government): Baheramura Development Block: Kota District: Bilaspur (State Chattisgarh) Proposed and Approved by Fulbaripara Gram Sabha (village assembly) On 02/03/2017.

**The Adivasi (indigenous) Baiga people that are settled in Fulwaripara have lived in this region for more than 200 years. Yet, they have been displaced numerous times.** As far as we can remember, our ancestors settled in Belghana some 200 years back. This used to be a hilly area before the railway line was built. We used to live in what is the current market area in Belghana. Later, the construction of roads and a railway line destroyed our heritage and we settled in Behramuda. Initially, seven households (3-4 families each) settled there, five



were Baiga families and two were Gonds. From that moment on we started losing our land.

The grandfather of Phuleswari, one woman from the village who has been twice in jail due to this struggle, had mortgaged 9 acre (almost 4 hectares) of land for Rs 140 (around 2 dollars) during the famine era. Later, false papers of the land were made. I remember that we had just harvested paddy rice and brought it to the threshing floor, at the time that land grabbers took it away.

**The names of the villages in the area also make reference to the Baiga history and their relation with the tigers in the region.** The Mata Choraha was a worshiping place in Behramuda for Baigas and every year we performed rituals. But **we lost our worshiping place**, as it was taken over by others when we were forced out. The day before the annual paddy rice harvest celebration, called cherchera (or poush puni), each household gave an offering to the gods and contributed to sacrifice a goat. The goat was beheaded and placed at the foot of the gods- "budadev". We ate meat along with new rice and celebrated. Each household also gave offerings to the village elder (mukadam) who would bless the houses by chanting mantras and offering holy water. This ritual, we believe, brings good rainfall for the coming season. A form of resin from the sal tree (*Shorea robusta*) is burnt as incense in Hindu ceremonies and is offered, together with coconut and betel nuts, by the Baiga elder to budadev.

**We used to do our traditional Bewar cultivation but later, influential people with links to the governmental administration and especially to the Forest Department threw us out.** At the end, that land was occupied by other communities practicing settled agriculture. The Baigas have always been a peace-loving community and we avoid confrontation so that is the reason we have always been at the receiving end. Baigas have always been subjugated so they left their homes and hearths and moved further inside the forest.

Then, as we were again uprooted, we made our huts in the area where the dam, "Madhav Rao Jalasaya", came up. After the dam was built, we had to move again and for the last 35-40 years we have been in Fulwaripara. The families have also grown in this period.

**Our traditional Bewar cultivation should start again, as it increases the abundance of the forest and its resources and also it increases the rainfall.**

We used to cook in earthen pots and have bedra (a type of legume) many times. There was no public distribution system at that time, which now gives us some

free rice. We had very little money at that time and had very little to eat. **Nowadays, our food does not have the same taste as our food back then.** Now we have more pulses and rice, but the taste is different. In many areas sawan and kutki are still continuing.

### **The tigers, our ancestors**

We have only heard that the government is trying to increase the number of tigers inside Achanakmar National Park [close to their community] by displacing villages and people. Six villages were displaced some years back, and the government says that they gave them land and compensation. But **money as compensation is not the solution.** The government should give **fertile land and rights to the forest to the Baigas for their livelihood and existence.**

We have lived with tigers since our existence and **we worship the tigers as our ancestors.** We do not have any problems with tiger conservation and we believe that **only by us staying in our villages, the tiger will survive.** Not by displacing the people from their villages. The Baigas know how to ward off tigers through our mantras and worshipping, so we do not have any problems. There were more tigers before, but now they are hardly seen.

**There is a need for international solidarity for the Adivasi (indigenous) communities in India. Our story should be heard** and that should create pressure on the government. **We must get our land and forest back for which we have struggled and even gone to jail.**

## **12. India's Tribal Communities- The Bonda Tribe of Odisha**



The **Bonda** (also known as the Bondo, Bondo Poraja, Bhonda, or Remo) is a Munda ethnic group who live in the isolated hill regions of the Malkangiri district of southwestern Odisha, India, near the junction of the three states of Odisha, Chhattisgarh, and Andhra Pradesh.

- The Bonda tribe of Odisha are believed to be part of the first wave of migration out of Africa about 60,000 years ago.
- They were the first forest settlers in India
- The Bondas continue to speak in their language, Remo, which comes under the Austroasiatic language belonging to the Mundari group.
- Their children are named after the day on which they were born.
- They have a unique dressing style – women are semiclad and wear various types of rings and necklaces around their bodies, while the men carry lethal bows and arrows.
- They are primarily agriculturalists, but also hunt, collect forest produce and work as labourers.
- They are in PVTG category

**POPULATION:** Approximately 12,000 (2011 census).

**LANGUAGE:** The Bonda language, also known as Bondo or Remo

**RELIGION:** Hinduism (99.54%) and Christian

**LOCATION:** Odisha, Chhattisgarh, and Andhra Pradesh.

## **CULTURE AND LIFESTYLE**

- The Bonda people are a tribal people who currently live in the hills of Odisha's Malkangiri district in India. There are two different Bonda tribes: the Upper Bondas with a population of 6,700 who are the most isolated from mainstream Indian society, and the Lower Bonda with a population of 17,000.
- Upper Bondas have almost no connection to the outside world. **Dambaru Sisha** took the oath of office to become **the first MLA{Member of legislative assembly} to the Bonda tribe**, to which he traces his ancestry. Sisha attempts to protect the traditions and culture of the people while providing them with educational opportunities. Only 6% of Bondas are literate. The life expectancy of the tribe is so low they are nearly extinct
- The unfree labour or Goti system in India is known as Gufam by the Bonda people. According to Pati, a male bonded labour is called Gufam-Rem whereas a female labourer is a Gufam-Boy. When death or mora occurs, it is custom to sacrifice a cow on the tenth day, a practice also known as "Gaitang." Population growth in the Bonda Hills in India led to forest habitat decrease although there existed a well-balanced ecosystem. Poverty, however, became a fundamental issue among the Bonda people due to social customs regarding obligatory marriages and deaths, along with myriad other socio-religious practices.
- These customs did not improve health condition nor economic status, which has created much poverty for them. For instance, crop production is hardly able to feed the population. In order to overcome starvation, the Bonda people, or Ku duburu Remo, often take out loans (Kalantar or Badi) in order to eat. The loans are usually in cash and are taken from a community member or a figure that serves as a landlord Sakar Remo. Roughly 62 out of 245 households in the Bonda hills are in

debt. Loans taken even in cash are charged interest rates, and these funds often provide payments for bride prices, fines, and the performance of socio-religious rites.

- As a result, debt payment becomes difficult, with constant fines and interest rates being increased. Very often the Bonda people are led to debt bondage and are forced to liquidate assets such as land, trees, animals, etc. They live in mostly kutcha house and are self-reliant.

### **MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE**

- Bonda people are often led to bonded labour through marriage, also known as diosing. A form of dowry (known as Gining) is paid for brides. In Gining items are used to determine how many arranged marriages will take place. For instance, the number of cows relies upon the social status of the girl. Bonda boys are expected to marry between the ages of 10 and 12.
- Although a man may pay the price of a bride for his brother, the brother must always return the amount owed. Divorce, also known as “Lung Sisi” is also an issue within the Bonda people. In some extreme circumstances, such as if a Bonda woman is divorced for adultery, the former husband demands double the price that was paid for their marriage.
- The village council determines the severity of the case arrives at a decision based upon the number of cows given back.
- However, if a man is the one who caused the wrong which resulted in divorce, he can no longer get married through an arranged marriage system.
- They usually don't marry non-tribal, but if do so it is accepted.

### **GENDER ROLES**

- In Bonda society, women enjoy a privileged position. They are the primary workers and providers of food for the community. This matriarchal dominance is also seen in the marital norms of the community. Bonda girls largely marry boys who are at least five to ten years younger than them. Thus the girl looks after her husband as he grows up and in turn, he cares for his older wife. In contrast with many other populations in India, the number of women among the Bonda greatly exceeds the number of

men.

- Among the men alcoholism is a major issue. They spend much time brewing and consuming liquor from rice, palm and the mahua flower. The Bondas are trained in using arms at a young age. This, coupled with rampant alcoholism and their reputation for a quick temper, has contributed to high rates of fratricide among them. The Bondas still use binnimaya pratha, or barter, and they customarily go to a market every Sunday. They like to put castor oil on their heads. The women make wall paintings in their homes

### **ECONOMIC EXISTENCE**

- The Bonda people live in the safe altitude of hills amidst the forest.
- Basically they lead a life of hunter and food gatherer for the most part of their existence.
- In course of time hunting became illegal and forest declined rapidly.
- They began hill slope cultivation in slash and burn (Swidden) method.
- They could not develop efficiency in this and the crops produced was meagre for their requirement.
- Forest adaptation made them self sufficient and fearless people who did not allow anybody to enter their territory and themselves did not come down to take others help.
- The government development agencies were trying for a long time to make the Hill Bondas aware of the modern methods but met with little success.
- For the last two decades or so, various non-government agencies and also government people became partially successful to befriend the High land Bonda people and taught them agricultural methods.
- Now the Bondas are gradually responding to the development activities to eliminate poverty illness and ignorance. Much is awaited to be done.

### **THREATS TO BONDA CULTURE AND IMPACT OF MODERN WORLD**

- The Government of Odisha has over the years tried to bring the Bonda into the mainstream and set up the Bonda Development Agency (BDA) in 1977 with this aim. Outside influences resulted in the Bondas being given new gods. The curriculum in the government school also seeks to inject this process through prayers and songs. The Bonda has begun to take up non-traditional occupations as migrant labourers and as peons and clerks in

government offices. This process of mainstreaming has however also had its fallout.

- Remo or Bonda has approximately 2,500 speakers in the Jayapur hills of Koraput. Despite a large number of speakers of a few Munda languages, bilingualism is widespread. At the present break-neck speed of assimilation, most Munda languages will not survive to the end of this century. All Munda language communities are under heavy demographic and socio-economic pressure to assimilate linguistically to the local Indo-Aryan majority language
- The Remo language is now an endangered tongue as more Bondas have taken to Odia as their primary language of communication. The absence of a script or text for Remo adds to the threat of its extinction. It is also feared that other indigenous knowledge of the Bondas will also become a casualty to this emphasis on integrating them with Odia society. They don't have basic facilities like school, health, electricity etc. The employment rate is very low. They have a very low literacy rate

### **13. New report highlights the neglect of the health of India's tribal communities**

**Tribal communities have large burdens of undernutrition, malaria, TB and leprosy but have little access to health systems.**

One hundred and four million tribal people, accounting for 8.6 percent of India's population, are heavily marginalised and discriminated against. Not only are tribal communities socio-economically othered by the mainstream Indian populace, they also face a host of structural inequalities, with access to healthcare being one of the biggest.

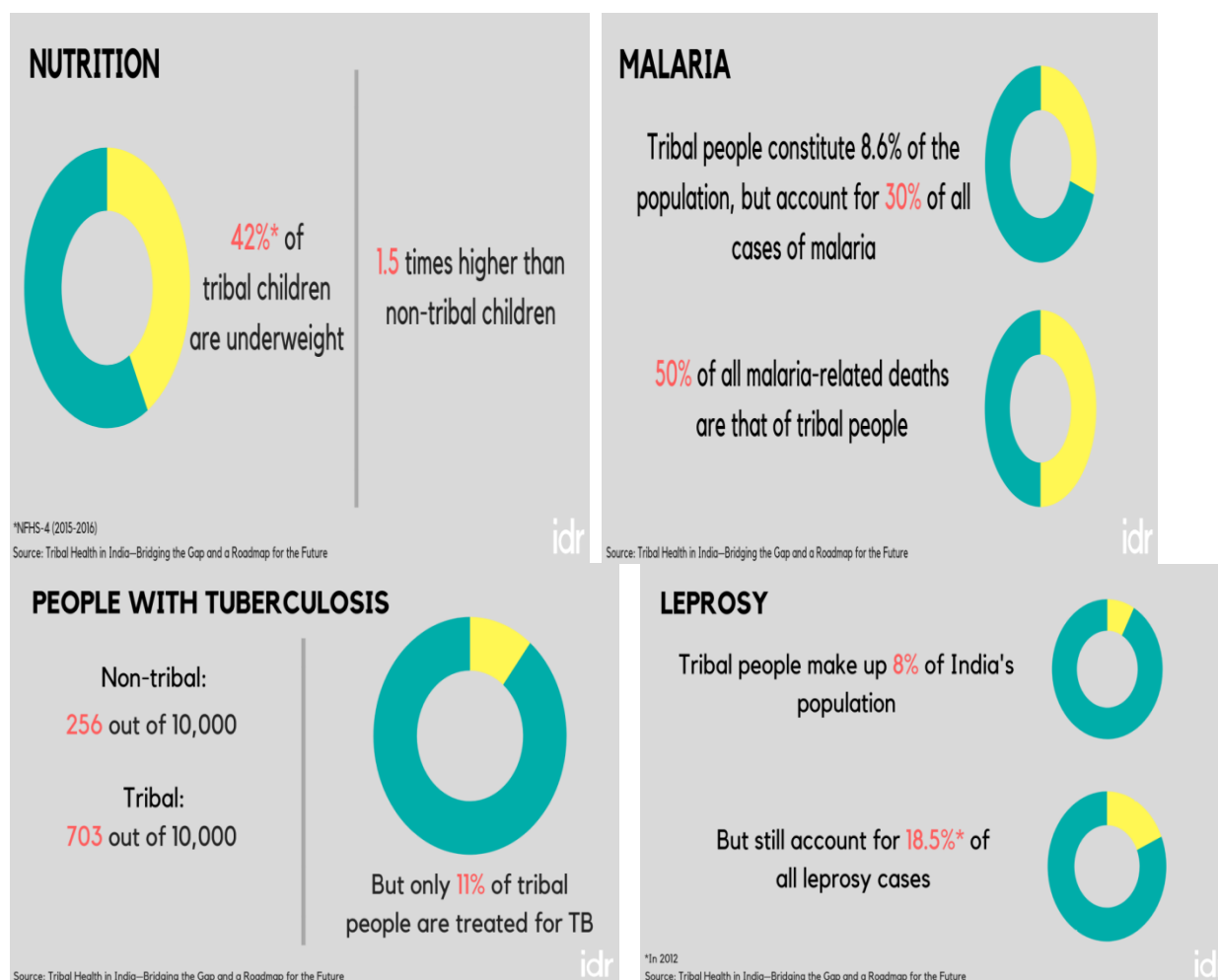
While there seems to be a vague consensus amongst policymakers that tribal communities have poor health and restricted access to healthcare, there are still no comprehensive policies that meet this need, and no reliable data about the state of tribal health. Tribal healthcare in India usually falls within the ambit of

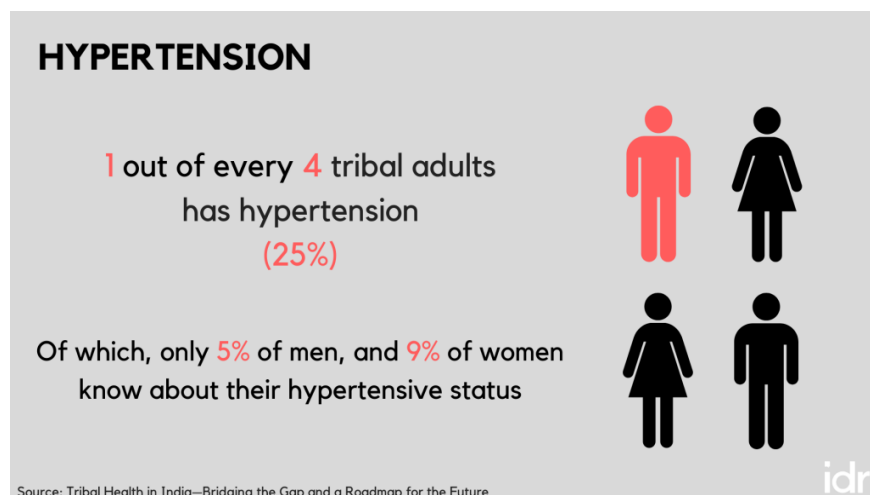


rural healthcare. The assumption that the problems and needs of tribal people are the same as that of rural populations is incorrect; the difference in terrain, environment, social systems and culture, all lead to tribal communities having their unique set of healthcare needs.

To address this, the Expert Committee on Tribal Health, headed by Dr Abhay Bang, was created. This led to the examination of how tribal people in India suffer from inequity in health, and how this gap can be bridged.

Over four years, the committee studied the health issues, culture around health, and healthcare infrastructure present in tribal areas, and sought potential ways forward through a consultative process with researchers, representatives of tribal people, and other experts. The result? This report – Tribal Health in India – Bridging the Gap and a Roadmap for the Future – the first of its kind in India.





Tribal communities face the “triple burden” of disease. Apart from high rates of malnutrition and communicable diseases (TB, leprosy, HIV etc), the advent of rapid urbanisation, and changing lifestyles and environment, has led to a rise in non-communicable diseases as well (cancer, diabetes, and hypertension). These are both in addition to the burden of mental illness and subsequent addiction.

Taking this into consideration, the committee made state visits to tribal areas, organised a national workshop, reviewed evidence from other countries, and looked to organisations working on ground with tribal communities to identify possible solutions, and chart a roadmap for the future.

### **What can be done to improve the state of tribal healthcare?**

The report lays out nine recommendations for the future. The overarching goal, according to the committee, should be to bridge the gap in healthcare for tribal communities, and to bring health coverage and indicators at par with the state average by at least 2027.

To do so, a functioning, sustainable system of healthcare should be in place by 2022. Focus needs to be turned to comprehensive primary healthcare, local participation and human resources, and health education and research.

The committee emphasises the following:

- An annual budget equal to 2.5 percent GDP per capita basis must be allocated and spent on tribal healthcare (this comes to approximately Rs 2,500 per tribal in 2015-'16).

- New entities – a Tribal Health Council and Directorate for Tribal Health – must be established at both state and union levels, to focus solely on tribal health including generating data, reviewing finances, and monitoring programmes.
- Service delivery needs to be restructured so that the government focuses 70 percent of its resources for tribal health on primary care, and makes the basket of healthcare services larger.
- All of the above must be matched with adequate human resources and infrastructure.

By ensuring that adequate attention and diligence is paid to tribal healthcare, and structural changes are implemented to incorporate tribal health needs, the state of tribal healthcare can improve.

#### The human resource problem

A significant gap highlighted in the report is the lack of healthcare professionals that are available to work with tribal communities. Healthcare professionals view postings in tribal areas as a punishment of sorts, and are hesitant to go, much less stay, there.

With this in mind, the report emphasises the need for a significant mindset change, but more importantly, points to the opportunity that lies in motivating and training tribal people themselves to join the health force. “If we work with the communities, we will find that tribal youth are an excellent resource, and inducting them into healthcare will be a more feasible, sustainable, long-term solution.”

The report also states that traditional healers within tribal communities should be recognised and utilised. There is no dearth of health-related folklore in tribal communities, and tribal people rely heavily on naturopathy, using medicinal leaves, roots, fruits, and seeds from their surrounding ecosystems. The lack of spirituality and emotionality in the modern healthcare system is a factor that sometimes keeps people away from public health systems; including traditional healers in healthcare programmes could begin to address this issue.

It is important to look at tribal health problems as separate and distinct, and clubbing them together with the issues faced in general by rural populations negates the vastly different context within which tribal communities exist.

The committee identified 10 health issues that affect tribal people disproportionately. These are: Malaria, malnutrition, child mortality, maternal health problems, family planning and infertility, addiction and mental health issues, sickle cell disease, animal bites and accidents, low health literacy, and poor health of tribal children in *Ashramsalas*.

These problems are specific to tribal communities, should be recognised as such, and then be addressed with the community in mind.

Research and data on tribal health

As mentioned earlier, there is a dearth of data available on tribal health indicators, and so moving forward, the committee outlines four principals that must underpin all research.

- Respect for tribal culture,
- Relevance to tribal communities,
- Reciprocity through a two-way exchange of learning, and
- Responsibility to ensure that the research being done has no adverse effects on the communities.

#### **14. Ministry of Tribal Affairs in collaboration with TRI Telangana organised workshop on 'Indigenous Knowledge & Health Care: The Way Forward'**

**Discussions held on importance of indigenous practices of tribal, infrastructure challenges to tribal health and on creating repository of researches on indigenous practices**



Tribal Research Institute, Telangana, in collaboration with the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, organised a two Days workshop on 'Indigenous Knowledge & Health Care: The Way Forward' from 19<sup>th</sup> January to 20<sup>th</sup> January 2022 with technical support from the United Nations Development Programme.

Smt. Satyavathi Rathod, Minister of Tribal Welfare, Women & Child Welfare, Govt. of Telangana, inaugurated the Workshop. Speaking on the occasion, she discussed the importance of indigenous practices of tribal healers and their utility in remote areas as these are plant-based remedies and have little side effects. She also said that tribals have lot of faith in such healers and have ready acceptance among the tribal communities. She discussed various initiatives of Telangana Government to promote it and she urged the tribal youth to take it forward.

TCR & TI Director, Sri V. Sarveshwar Reddy supervised various sessions which pertained to indigenous practices, tribal health issues, Healthcare governance system, infrastructure challenges to tribal health, role of tribal healers vis a vis technology, various legal provisions related to tribal people's rights and the challenges involved.

Speaking on this occasion, Dr Navaljit Kapoor, Joint Secretary, MoTA mentioned various efforts of the Ministry including several projects given to TRIs and reputed research organizations. He informed that Ministry is working on creating repository of researches done on tribal healers and indigenous practices. Tribal Research Institute, Uttarakhand has been designated as the nodal TRI for coordination with other TRIs and compile all projects related to

traditional medicine and healing practices across country. He also stressed on preservation of biodiversity and capacity building of gram panchayats to ensure there is no over exploitation of natural resources.

Prof. Dr A.B. Ota, Director, SCSTRTI, Govt. of Odisha, stated that there is need to formulate a template to bring uniformity in the research methodology.

Dr Christina Z. Chonthu, Secy. and Commissioner, Tribal Welfare, Govt. of Telangana highlighted various activities of Telangana for research in Indigenous practices. She stressed need of collaboration amongst different stakeholders so that the benefits of these reach community at large.

Ms Shoko Noda, Resident Representative of the UNDP discussed the activities undertaken by UNDP in tribal areas in collaboration with Ministry of Tribal Affairs and state Government.

#### **15. Are India's healthcare goals inclusive of tribal peoples?**



**India will struggle to achieve its Sustainable Development Goals without a focused, multi-stakeholder effort to improve the lives of tribal populations.**

Improvement in healthcare delivery for India's 104 million tribal people poses a major challenge to the country's ability to meet the health and nutrition targets set by the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030.

As evident from data in the tribal policy brief, compared to India's overall population, tribal communities suffer from higher maternal and under-five mortality; stunted, wasted, and underweight children; higher incidence of malaria and tuberculosis; and a high and growing burden of diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and hypertension. Therefore, without an explicit and concerted focus on delivering quality healthcare services to its tribal populations, India runs the risk of excluding and further marginalising them, as well as undermining its efforts to reach SDG 2 on hunger, and SDG 3 on health and wellbeing.

To dive deeper into these issues and explore possible solutions for scaled impact, a joint team of Piramal Swasthya and The Bridgespan Group recently undertook extensive research (including interviews and field visits) on the tribal health challenges confronting India. This builds on Piramal Swasthya's work in the tribal mandals of Visakhapatnam district as well as in the 25 NITI Aayog-mentored Aspirational Districts.



Based on our study, we concluded that ending preventable deaths and reducing morbidity in tribal areas will require major investment in building strong and functioning primary healthcare systems with robust referral chains. Any such action also needs to overcome the significant barriers that tribal populations face in terms of access to, and awareness of quality healthcare.

### **1. Barriers in accessing healthcare services**

Most tribal people live in hilly, forested areas that are difficult to reach. The majority are scattered across two regions: Central India (i.e., Southern Rajasthan, Eastern Gujarat, Northern Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Odisha) and Northeastern India (i.e., Meghalaya, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura, Sikkim, Nagaland, and Mizoram).

In many cases, remote areas lack motorable roads and transport facilities. For example, to reach Nanda, a habitation in the tribal mandals of Araku in Visakhapatnam, healthcare providers from Araku town commute 34 kilometres, of which they have to trek over hilly terrain for 14 kilometres, carrying their bags of equipment and health records.

Now imagine the same commute, in reverse, for a tribal woman in labour to reach the nearest health centre; and particularly if she needs a caesarean delivery, to reach the suitably equipped district hospital in time. In regions that are susceptible to violence and political turbulence, such travel becomes even more precarious.

### **2. Barriers in accessing information about health practices**

Traditional and socio-cultural beliefs, norms, and practices, combined with a lack of understanding of these practices by modern medicine, make tribal communities reluctant to seek formal care. In addition, linguistic differences alienate tribal people and hinder their understanding of, and access to care.

As a result, even in emergency situations such as a snakebite, tribal communities typically prefer to first visit a local healer. This usually leads to a higher number of preventable deaths due to snakebite, as patients are often brought to modern healthcare facilities too late.

In a similar vein, it takes focused efforts, often over a long period, to enable tribal people – including community leaders – to see value in institutional delivery or preventive health practices for pregnant women and newborns.

Successful healthcare delivery models in tribal districts by nonprofits such as SEARCH, Ekjut, and Jan Swasthya Sahayog are grounded in first building rapport and trust with the tribal communities by spending time with them, as well as by enabling and empowering them to participate in the delivery of healthcare services. This has not only improved their health seeking behaviour, but has also resulted in positive health outcomes.

However, such community-led practices have not been replicated across all tribal regions in India, and there is an inadequate representation of the communities' voice and agency in managing their own health.

Traditional and socio-cultural beliefs, norms, and practices, combined with a lack of understanding of these practices by modern medicine, make tribal communities reluctant to seek formal care. | Picture courtesy: SEARCH

### **3. Shortfall of public health facilities**

The above challenges are compounded by the severe shortfall in public health facilities and trained workforce in tribal areas. Per government guidelines, tribal and hilly areas should have one Health Sub Centre (HSC) per 3,000 population, one Primary Health Centre (PHC) per 20,000 population, and one Community Health Centre (CHC) per 80,000 population. In about half of the Indian states, the number of health institutions in tribal areas fall below the norm by 27–50 percent. For example, Madhya Pradesh reported a shortfall of 10 percent HSCs, 41 percent PHCs, and 38 percent CHCs in its tribal districts, while Jharkhand reported a shortfall of 37 percent HSCs, 69 percent PHCs, and 29 percent CHCs in its tribal districts.<sup>2</sup> Analysing the data from Rural Health Statistics 2018, there was an 82.3 percent shortage in specialists at Community Health Centres in tribal areas.

Further, there is poor understanding of what constitutes quality care, absence of systematic technical training of health workforce, and lack of systems and incentives to rigorously monitor and deliver quality services.

### **4. Lack of data**

Lastly, there is almost a complete lack of reliable tribal-specific health data, to inform policies and health interventions specific to the needs of the diverse tribal communities. These range from lack of data on the incidence and prevalence of

disease in tribal areas to a lack of knowledge about what health solutions work locally and why.

### Finding solutions that are scalable

Unfortunately, over the last few decades, few scaled solutions have emerged to address these dire health gaps. Several locally focused nonprofits and operating foundations are positively impacting the lives of tribal communities. For example, SEARCH has not only transformed the lives of the tribal people of 48 villages in Gadchiroli,<sup>3</sup> but has also demonstrated the model of home-based neonatal care. Similarly, Jan Swasthya Sahayog in Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh; Ekjut India in Chakradharpur, Jharkhand; Tribal Health Initiative in Sittilingi, Tamil Nadu; SEWA Rural in Bharuch, Gujarat; Tata Steel CSR in Jharkhand and Odisha; and a few other organisations; work deeply on different aspects of tribal and rural healthcare services.

However, given the diversity, geographic spread, and unmet health needs of India's tribal population, none of these models have yet been scaled or replicated to bring about sizeable impact. The work of these nonprofits is also constrained by inadequate funding, lack of a robust evidence base to inform policy, lack of knowledge sharing, and limited experience of working with government health systems.

The report by the expert committee on tribal health, chaired by Dr Abhay Bang, in 2018 recommended the creation of a functional, universal, and sustainable system of healthcare for tribal people by 2022. The government is yet to take action on the committee's recommendations.

Given the magnitude of the challenge and the national aspiration to attain the SDG 2 and SDG 3 targets for nutrition and health respectively, India urgently needs collaborative action to provide quality healthcare that is accessible to, and welcoming of tribal communities. No single funder or stakeholder, however capable, can single-handedly solve this issue, particularly by the SDG 2030 timeline. To bring about population-level change, local communities, government, implementing organisations, research agencies, and funders must join forces to bring about systemic and scaled health impact.

Collaboration can facilitate on-ground implementation of interventions to improve both tribal healthcare demand and service delivery, as well as develop and disseminate knowledge of what works and what does not. This can be

enabled by a user-friendly and interoperable technology platform for better governance and accountability.

Such collaborative action at a systemic level requires a deep and long-term commitment of human, financial, and social capital resources by all stakeholders involved. Whilst irreversible improvements in tribal health outcomes will likely not be quick or straightforward, India no longer has the luxury of continuing to wait and watch as millions of its tribal peoples suffer and die from preventable causes.

## 16. The new ways to save tribal languages

More than 200 languages have disappeared in India in the past 50 years and another 197 are considered at risk. The languages of Adivasi groups are mostly spoken. Little room is available online and in official documents for those languages with a script. Yet something has changed in recent years, as more grassroots initiatives try to preserve the cultural heritage of indigenous tribes.

New Delhi (AsiaNews) – The link between a script and any one language is not self-evident. India has hundreds of languages and many of them are likely to disappear in the coming decades since they are only spoken by small numbers of people, in most cases tribal groups. Some languages are used only with kin or fellow tribal members, and are not used in official documents or social media. But something is changing.

Ganesh Birua, 23, discovered only in 2014 that his language, *Ho*, a Munda language, had an alphabet, called *warang citi*. After he learnt it self-taught, he began to use social media to encourage others to learn it as well. Eventually some linguists and researchers contacted him to include the *warang citi* script in the international Unicode system, which assigns a unique code to every character, so that language scripts look the same on all keyboards and digital devices.

In 2008 Malati Murmu, tired of reading news only in English, Hindi and a few other languages, founded a newspaper, the *Fagun*, in the Santali language, with an initial circulation of only 500 copies. The script used, *Ol Chiki*, was invented in 1925 by writer Ragunath Murmu. For Malati, the main goal of the newspaper is to protect the Santali language and literature and to promote tribal culture. Its circulation now averages around 5,000 printed copies.

In 2001, when he was only 17, Banwang Losu began to think about a writing system for *Wancho*, his mother tongue, spoken mainly in Arunachal Pradesh, in lieu of the Latin letters. In 2019 the alphabet he developed in almost 20 years of research was included in the international Unicode system.

In 1971 India carried out a linguistic census, but excluded all languages with less than 10,000 speakers, the threshold at which a language is the risk of extinction according to the United Nations.

In the last 50 years, at least 220 languages in India have disappeared and another 197 are considered endangered. Of these, only two fall under the Eighth Schedule of the Indian constitution, which recognises 22 official languages. However, according to some estimates, more than 19,500 native dialects are spoken in the Indian subcontinent. In addition to *Ho* and *Santali*, only three other tribal languages – *Soura*, *Munda* and *Kui* – have a script.

Adivasis are the indigenous peoples of the Indian subcontinent, a mosaic of tribal groups that live mostly on the margins of society, poor, with little access to education, and are mostly animists or Christians.

Losing a language means losing the cultural heritage that goes with it. For Ayesha Kidwai of the Centre for Linguistics, School of Language, Literature and Culture Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, “Tribal languages are a treasure trove of knowledge about a region’s flora, fauna and medicinal plants. Usually, this information is passed from generation to generation. However, when a language declines, that knowledge system is completely gone.” Being able to speak and write in one’s native language has become more pressing with the rise of the Internet. According to 2017 statistics, 70 per cent of Indian online users trust more content in their native language than in English.

Not having content available in one’s native language is a huge handicap in terms of access to knowledge and impoverishes the cultural debate. This is worse in India, with 658 million Internet users (less than half of the population), where social media disinformation is rampant. The most immediate way to document a language at risk without a script is to collect audio-visual material with recordings of people who speak their mother tongue. This however carries the risk of creating a large archive while keeping tribal communities isolated. In 2014 journalist Shubhranshu Choudhary created CGNet Swara, an online platform dedicated to issues related to the central region of Gondwana, with stories and news in the Gondi language.

Anyone, anywhere in India, can report stories on this platform by making a phone call to a number linked to it. The stories are available for playback online (which is not obvious in rural areas) and over the phone. This is another way to interact like any other social media, but one that respects the Gondi oral tradition. The Gondi language is spoken by two million people, but only 100 can write it. Thus, providing a language with its own script is not always the best solution to the issue of language survival. However, lack of a script has its own problems

Last year the *Ho* alphabet was excluded from the Unicode system because of “the absence of a modern native user community that would be able to use these scripts for useful mnemonic identifiers in a familiar language” and the “problematic and little understood nature of these scripts”.

In other words, it is necessary for the target community to be able to read and write, not just to speak their own language. Other speakers have managed to create keyboards and applications in the *Ho*. Hercules Munda, for example, created a language game application for Munda languages. A member of the Munda tribal group, he found out that many of its users were Adivasi youth whose parents had left their villages to raise their children in urban centres. All these initiatives are the work of individuals because the Indian state does little or nothing to preserve tribal languages and cultures.

Still, in 2013, India’s Education Ministry established the Scheme for Protection and Preservation of Endangered Languages (SPPEL) “to document and archive the country’s languages that have become endangered or likely to be endangered in the near future. Another positive note came last year from the eastern state of Odisha, where most Indian Adivasis live. State authorities decided that elementary school textbooks would be published in 21 tribal languages using the Oriya alphabet – except for *Santali*, which can continue to use *Ol Chiki*. However, the project, called Samhati, is not easy to implement. In addition to the challenge of standardising the dialects of Odisha’s 62 tribal groups (to educate at least 2,000,000 tribal children), a thousand teachers need to acquire language skills in tribal languages.

## **17. Gujarat tribals oppose river linking project**

**Topic in syllabus : 6.2 Problems of the tribal communities**



The project will submerge around 7,500 hectares of land owing to construction of seven dams.

Tribal leaders from Gujarat's Dang, Valsad, Surat and Navsari districts are camping in state capital Gandhinagar to garner support of the MLAs of both ruling BJP and opposition Congress for an agitation against the Par-Tapi-Narmada river linking project announced in the recent Union Budget.

The project will submerge around 7,500 hectares of land owing to construction of seven dams. Tribal leaders say the project would affect 75 villages and displace more than 35,000 villagers. The linking project proposes to transfer water from the surplus regions of Western Ghats to the deficit regions of Saurashtra and Kutch.

The same project had come to a halt in 2007-2008 following strong opposition from tribals. The tribal leaders alleged the Centre designed the project to "cover up" the Narmada Yojana's "failure". Hundreds of tribals will be displaced as a result of the project in Dang, Valsad, and Tapi districts. Dang's forests abounding in teak and bamboo and other woods will stand submerged.

Tribal leaders said they have seen many projects like the Narmada Yojana, Statue of Unity, Ukai, etc., where the tribals displaced from their lands are yet to be compensated. A delegation of senior tribal leaders of south Gujarat called on the



leader of Opposition in the Gujarat Assembly, Sukhram Rathva. Tribal leaders said they wanted the elected representatives to discuss the project in the Assembly. Activist Mukesh Patel said, "We won't let our tribals be displaced from their forest land in the name of the river linking project. Our slogan is 'dam hatao, Dang bachao.'"

### 18. Tribals migrated from Chhattisgarh face eviction in AP, Telangana



Forest authorities however, say they are driving out people from forest regions to stop them from cutting down trees and clearing the area for cultivation.

Hundreds of Maoist-violence hit tribal people from Bastar region of Chhattisgarh who fled and settled in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh in 2005-06 are facing grave threat of 'double displacement' now. The two state governments have allegedly accelerated attempts to evict the cross-border settlers through afforestation drives on the land occupied by them.

The cause of these displaced people has been taken up by The New Peace Process – an initiative working to restore peace in Maoist-violence parts of central India. Convener of the initiative, Shubhranshu Choudhary told THE WEEK that during the past few days, such afforestation drives that also included razing of houses of settlers in some cases, were reported from at least 51 settlements, most of them in Bhadrachalam district of Telangana.

Some such affected settlements are Tekalagudem of Thoggudem panchayat in Pinapaka mandala, village Angur (panchayat- Kanaiyagudem, Block Karkagudem), Jaggaram (Sadragoda panchayat, mandal Suhpalhi), Kranti Nagar (Gattumal Panchayat, Lakshmi Devi Palli mandal) Engappanagara (Mukmamed panchayat, Mulkanpalli mandal) – all in Bhadradri Kothagudem district of Telangana, and Kothuru village of Lachchhigudem panchayat in the Chinturu mandal of East Godavari district (Andhra Pradesh).

The afforestation process on the lands cultivated by the settlers but not owned by them was going on in phases for the past two years and informally the tribals were being asked to go back to Chhattisgarh. About half of the land cultivated by the settlers has already been brought under afforestation now, Choudhary said.

Last year, Chhattisgarh home minister had given a written reply in the Assembly that no one has been displaced from the state due to Naxalite violence, so there is no question of their resettlement.

The displaced people are thus caught in a serious bind and are now looking forward to the Union government to resolve this inter-state issue on the lines of the one chalked out for Bru Tribals of North-East.

Bru Tribals in Mizoram were compelled to leave their homes and go to Tripura due to internal violence. In 2019-20, the Union Home Ministry prepared a Bru rehabilitation plan and rehabilitated them in Tripura and Mizoram. The Tribals settled in AP and Telangana are seeking a similar rehabilitation plan, Choudhary said.

He added that Section 3.1.m (In Situ Rehabilitation or Exchange Act) of the Forest Rights Act 2006 could be used for the purpose as the section mentions that if a person is displaced from his forest land, the government will give them the land in return. Applications to this effect were made by the affected people, but no progress has been made, Choudhary said.

Motorcycle rally, SC petition planned

A 'Dandakaranya to Delhi' motorcycle rally is being planned from March 23 to highlight the issue and to seek a resolution. The rally is likely to start from Telangana and pass through Bastar in Chhattisgarh on its way to Delhi, Choudhary said. Violence victims living in Chhattisgarh and other common people are also likely to participate in this peace rally.

The displaced people are also trying to file a petition in the Supreme Court. Also, efforts are on to get the members of parliament from the region concerned to write to Home Minister Amit Shah in the matter.

What is the issue?

In 2005, when violence suddenly increased in Chhattisgarh in the backdrop of the Salwa Judum initiative of the state government, about 55,000 people were reportedly forced to leave their homes and villages in Bastar region and flee to the neighbouring state of Andhra Pradesh (now divided into Telangana). These people cut forests on the borders of Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Chhattisgarh and started making a living there. The New Peace Process has compiled a list of 6,721 families involving about 35,000 people in 260 of such settlements.

Most of the displaced people belong to the Muria tribe who are part of the Gonds. They are however called Gutti Koya in Andhra Pradesh, but due to a spelling mistake, they were registered as 'Gutta Koya' in these two states and have not been given even the status of a tribe, thus depriving them of any benefits. However, the displaced people continued to remain settled in these two states to avoid facing violence back home in Chhattisgarh.

However, with the AP and Telangana governments now trying to evict them from the settlements, these displaced tribals have turned into 'nowhere people', Choudhary said.