

**ANTHROPOLOGY CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE
NOVEMBER 2022**

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PAPER -1

PHYSICAL & ARCHAEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

1. Fossil skulls rewrite the stories of two ancient human ancestors



Found in a hilltop cave, the oldest known *Homo erectus* and *Paranthropus robustus* fossils shed light on a critical period of hominin evolution. In the winter of 2015, Jesse Martin and Angeline Leece were extracting what they thought were baboon remains from a piece of rock. The two students at La Trobe University in Australia were part of an expedition to collect and study fossils from the Drimolen quarry northwest of Johannesburg, South Africa. As they cleaned the skull fragments and pieced them back together, however, they realized the fossils did not come from a baboon, but instead comprised the braincase of a young *Homo erectus*, a species never before identified in South Africa.

“I don’t think our supervisors believed us until they came over to have a look,” Martin recalls. The braincase was described in the journal *Science* today, together with the skullcap of another ancient hominin, *Paranthropus robustus*, found at the same site. A suite of different dating techniques all hinted that the

two species' braincases were more or less the same age – about two million years old. This would make them the earliest fossils ever found for their respective species, according to the new study coauthored by Martin and Leece. "I think they have made a strong case for the oldest *Homo erectus* in Africa, and in fact, in the world," Lee Berger, a paleoanthropologist at the University of Witwatersrand said.

The enigmatic origins of *Homo erectus* The age of the fossils was particularly surprising for the *Homo erectus* skull. Most paleoanthropologists believe that this human ancestor arose in East Africa, where several younger *Homo erectus* fossils – as well as the likely remains of older *Homo* species – have been found. Some have even hypothesized that *Homo erectus* originated outside of Africa, because the oldest known fossils from the species – before this new find – were discovered at the site of Dmanisi in Georgia. An Asian origin for *H. erectus* now seems exceedingly unlikely, Martin says. "The first problem for that idea is that the earliest evidence for *Homo erectus* is now from South Africa. But the bigger problem is that there is no candidate ancestor for *Homo erectus* in Asia. If you dig any deeper at sites where *Homo erectus* remains have been found, there are no hominins there."

The discovery of the new braincase in South Africa, however, does not necessarily mean that *Homo erectus* originated there either. "Based on the current evidence, my guess is it emerged somewhere in Africa we haven't looked yet," Martin says. "This was really the first human experiment with globalization," Martin says. Three hominins in southern Africa Two million years ago, *Homo erectus* wasn't exactly abundant. "They appear to have been outnumbered 10 to 1 by *Paranthropus robustus*," Leece says. As its name indicates, *Paranthropus robustus* – one of the "robust australopithecines" – had a very stout skull, particularly large teeth, and an impressive crest on top of the braincase where its massive chewing muscles were attached. "The leading theory is that they were eating tough foods – not necessarily things that needed crunching, but foods that were fibrous and require a lot of chewing, like certain tubers or grasses," Leece says. The even older species *Australopithecus sediba* was also still roaming the region. The fossil record suggests this is about when *Australopithecus* started to be replaced by *Paranthropus* and *Homo*, a critical time in the evolution of our predecessor species.

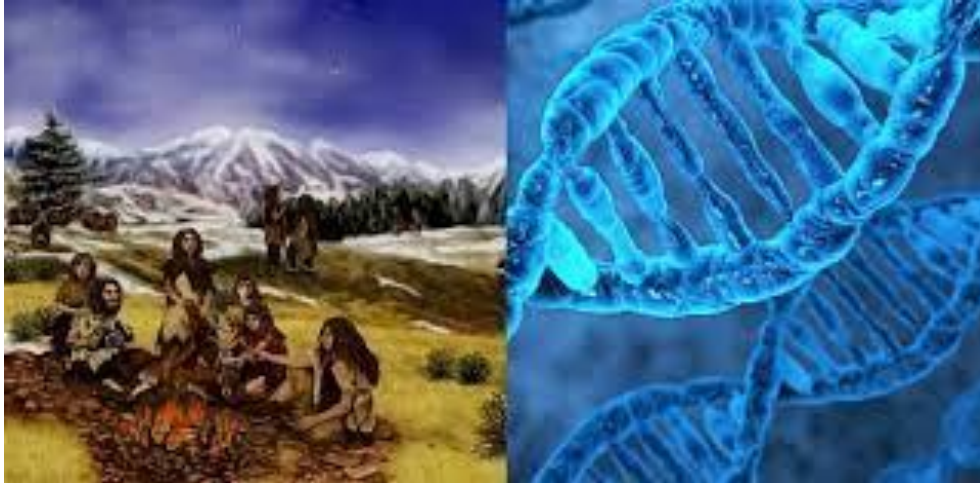
For most of the year, *Homo*, *Paranthropus*, and *Australopithecus* species had plenty of available resources, and all three were likely eating more or less the same things. But winters can be harsh in this area, Martin says. "In the morning,

it's freezing, and according to estimates, it would've been even colder then. So this was quite a tough climate for a hominin." Under those challenging circumstances, *Paranthropus robustus*'s powerful jaws and ability to eat tough, fibrous foods probably provided it with a significant advantage. One theory holds that *Australopithecus sediba* may have been a direct ancestor to the genus *Homo*, including the species *Homo erectus*.

The authors of the new study question this theory, however, as the newfound *Homo erectus* skull is older than *Australopithecus sediba* remains found at the nearby site of Malapa. Berger, who was part of the team that found the *Australopithecus sediba* fossils at Malapa in 2010, believes that even though the *Homo erectus* skull is older, *Australopithecus sediba* still could have been an ancestor to the species. "Mother species can easily exist at the same time and place as their descendant species do," he says. Regardless of which of these species emerged first, one thing is clear: Over a million years later, only *Homo erectus* still walked the Earth. *Homo erectus* conquers the world While the hyperspecialized skull of *Paranthropus robustus* may have served it well in certain environments, the trait may have ultimately become its downfall, Leece says. When the environment changes, extreme adaptations can become a handicap. Comparing the two newly analyzed braincases, it becomes clear that *Homo erectus*, while initially outcompeted by *Paranthropus robustus*, was working on a revolutionary adaptation of its own. *H. erectus*'s characteristic tear-shaped braincase suggests the early member of the *Homo* genus was expanding and reorganizing its brain.

The *Homo erectus* skull Martin and Leece wrested out of the rock did not belong to an adult. Judging by the extent to which the bones of the skull had already fused, the braincase came from a child between two and six years old. At this tender age, its brain would already have been larger than that of most *Australopithecus* and *Paranthropus* adults. And impressions on the fossils show that the child's brain was still growing, pushing the skull bones outward. "We can even see blood vessels," Martin says. Whereas *Paranthropus robustus* evolved a kind of "portable grinding stone," *Homo erectus* "adapted to be adaptable" and to solve all kinds of problems that it would have encountered along its journey from Africa to Asia and parts of southern Europe, Martin says. The species' increasingly nimble brain allowed it to outsmart other animals by fashioning tools, collaborating with others, and perhaps even pondering the future. *Homo erectus* survived for nearly two million years, making it the most successful species of *Homo* ever known.

2. Neandertals had older mothers and younger fathers



Researchers analyzed the genomes of more than 27,000 Icelanders to find out which parts of our genomes contain Neandertal DNA. When the ancestors of modern humans left Africa 50,000 years ago they met the Neandertals. In this encounter, the Neandertal population contributed around two percent of the genome to present day non-African populations. A collaboration of scientists from Aarhus University in Denmark, deCODE Genetics in Iceland, and the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig, Germany, have conducted the most comprehensive study to date using data obtained from 27,566 Icelanders, to figure out which parts of our genomes contain Neandertal DNA and what role it plays in modern humans.

Every person of non-African descent shares around two percent of their DNA with the Neandertals. However, different people carry different pieces of Neandertal DNA so when the authors added them up they could reconstruct at least 38 percent of the Neandertal genome using 14 million Neandertal DNA fragments. Comparing this Neandertal DNA with the Neandertal and Denisovan genomes, which were sequenced at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig, the researchers found that the Neandertal population that mixed with modern Icelanders was more similar to a Neandertal found in Croatia than to Neandertals found in Russia. Unexpectedly, they also found that Icelanders carry traces of Denisovan DNA, which was previously only thought to be present in East Asians and populations from Papua New Guinea. One possibility is that ancestors of the

Neandertal population who mixed with modern humans had earlier also mixed with Denisovans.

Differences in mutation patterns In each generation, parents pass their DNA on to their children, and the age of each parent is known to greatly affect the types of mutations that they pass on. “By comparing the genetic mutations on the Neandertal DNA fragments to the corresponding modern human DNA fragments we found that, on average, Neandertal children had older mothers and younger fathers compared to modern humans”, says first author Laurits Skov, a researcher from Aarhus University and the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology.

Finally, the authors show that Neandertal DNA has a relatively minor effect on human health and appearance today. The few cases where Neandertal DNA has an effect among Icelanders leads to a slightly reduced risk of prostate cancer, slightly shorter height and a slightly faster blood clotting time.

3. Homo heidelbergensis was Extremely Resourceful, New Research Shows



New research pieces together the activities and movements of a group of Homo heidelbergensis, a poorly understood species of archaic humans that lived between 700,000 to 200,000 years ago, as they made tools, including the oldest bone tools documented in Europe, and extensively butchered a large horse at the

480,000-year old archaeological site near Boxgrove, Sussex, the United Kingdom. The Horse Butchery Site is one of many excavated in quarries near Boxgrove, an internationally significant area that is home to Britain's oldest human remains.

During the excavations in the 1980-90s, archaeologists recovered more than 2,000 razor sharp flint fragments from eight separate groupings, known as knapping scatters. These are places where individual early humans knelt to make their tools and left behind a dense concentration of material between their knees. Embarking on an ambitious jigsaw puzzle to piece together the individual flints, Dr. Matthew Pope from the Institute of Archaeology at University College London and his colleagues discovered that in every case *Homo heidelbergensis* were making large flint knives called bifaces, often described as the perfect butcher's tool.

"This was an exceptionally rare opportunity to examine a site pretty much as it had been left behind by an extinct population, after they had gathered to totally process the carcass of a dead horse on the edge of a coastal marshland," Dr. Pope said. "Incredibly, we've been able to get as close as we can to witnessing the minute-by-minute movement and behaviors of a single apparently tight-knit group of early humans: a community of people, young and old, working together in a cooperative and highly social way." "We established early on that there were at least eight individuals at the site making tools, and considered it likely that a small group of adults, a 'hunting party,' could have been responsible for the butchery," he said.

"However, we were astonished to see traces of other activities and movement across the site, which opened the possibility of a much larger group being present." The detailed study of the horse bones shows the animal was not just stripped of meat, but each bone was broken down using stone hammers so that the marrow and liquid grease could be sucked out. The horse appears to have been completely processed, with the fat, marrow, internal organs and even the partially digested stomach contents providing a nutritious meal for the early human group of 30 or 40 individuals envisaged for the site.

However, the horse provided more than just food, and the detailed analysis of the bones found that several bones had been used as tools called retouchers.

“These are some of the earliest non-stone tools found in the archaeological record of human evolution,” said Simon Parfitt, also from the Institute of Archaeology at University College London. “They would have been essential for manufacturing the finely made flint knives found in the wider Boxgrove landscape.” “The finding provides evidence that early human cultures understood the properties of different organic materials and how tools could be made to improve the manufacture of other tools,” said Dr. Silvia Bello, a researcher at the Natural History Museum, London.

“Along with the careful butchery of the horse and the complex social interaction hinted at by the stone refitting patterns, it provides further evidence that early human population at Boxgrove were cognitively, social and culturally sophisticated.” Cooperative activity amongst larger numbers of people suggests these temporary sites could have been highly social spaces for interaction, learning and the sharing of tools and ideas. The Horse Butchery Site shows this behavior more vividly than any other site so far discovered in the archaeological record.

4. Seven footprints may be the earliest evidence of humans on the Arabian Peninsula

Experts say discovery of 120,000-year-old prints could shed new light on spread of Homo sapiens out of Africa. A set of seven footprints made at a lake about 120,000 years ago have been hailed as the earliest evidence of modern humans on the Arabian Peninsula – a discovery experts say could shed light on the spread of our species out of Africa. The path by which Homo sapiens spread around the world was full of twists and turns. Genetic studies suggested it was not until 60,000 years ago that a migration of modern humans out of Africa led to a successful spread across Europe.

However, it has been suggested that an incomplete skull found in Greece and dating to more than 200,000 years ago is from our species, while an 180,000 year old Homo sapiens jawbone has previously been discovered in Israel. A previous discovery in Arabia of an 88,000 year old fingerbone has also pointed to multiple early waves out of Africa – with experts saying the fossil, and nearby stone tools, revealed that Homo sapiens set out east, beyond Israel, far earlier than previously thought. Now the discovery of the seven footprints in the

northern part of the Arabian Peninsula in modern Saudi Arabia pushes this exploration to the east even further back in time.

“This is a story about the expansion of Homo sapiens into the heart of Arabia at an early date,” said Prof Michael Petraglia of the Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History, a co-author of the research. “It is not a story of coastal migrations, which has been the hypothesised route [modern humans took].” Writing in the journal *Science Advances*, an international team of researchers report how they found the footprints in an ancient lake deposit in the Nefund Desert, with dating of sediment above and below the prints revealing them to be between 112,000 and 121,000 years old. The sizes and spacing of four of the prints, they add, suggest they were made by at least two individuals. The team argue that the size of the prints, the absence of evidence for Neanderthals in the area at the time and the evidence that Homo sapiens were in Arabia almost 90,000 years ago, suggest the impressions were most likely made by modern humans.

The team also found a plethora of animal prints at the site, including those from ancient elephants and camels – but the animal bones showed no signs of butchery, and no stone tools were found. Taken together, the researchers say the findings suggest that the party made only a brief pit-stop at the lake. “At the time that humans were moving through this landscape, the area wouldn’t have been hyper-arid,” said Richard Clark-Wilson, a co-author of the research from Royal Holloway, University of London. Instead, he said, at that time – and various other periods in the past – it would have been a grassy savannah with bodies of water, offering opportunities for human migration.

“Human movements, and animal movements, tend to be linked to fresh water availability,” he said. While people who walked by the lake have left their mark on history, their fate remains unknown. “It appears that people repeatedly dispersed into Arabia during more humid periods, when the region was characterised by expansive grasslands and lakes and rivers,” said Mathew Stewart of the Max Planck Institute for Chemical Ecology, another author. “In the intervening periods, when the deserts returned, we suspect that people either died out or retreated to more favourable places.”

Dr Matthew Pope, an expert on ancient humans from University College London, who was not involved in the work, welcomed the findings. “Footprints

are so incredibly evocative – they are brilliant for dissolving time barriers,” he said. While Pope said it was not possible to infer many details about the party from the prints, he said the work added to a shifting view of Arabia in relation to the movement of Homo sapiens out of Africa. “This is a landscape that is productive, this is a landscape that can sustain human populations, so can provide a landscape for dispersal to happen,” he said.

5. Study Reveals Sapiens Copulated the Y Out of Neanderthals

Early human interbreeding with our “cousins” the Denisovans and Neanderthals is an established fact but newly sequenced Neanderthal Y-chromosomes tell scientists that modern humans are the product of a complex history of interspecies sex. Neanderthals had lived in Eurasia for more than 300,000 years, when our modern human ancestors left Africa in the most recent wave some 60,000–70,000 years ago. When the two groups met in Eurasia around 45,000 years-ago they mated and a whole new kind of human was formed. Recent research confirms early human interbreeding but also provides evidence that makes our earliest encounters with both Neanderthals and Denisovans a much more complicated relationship.

However, a new study on early human interbreeding has shown that those Neanderthals already had Homo sapiens’ genes on board from “much earlier encounters,” and the new research also suggests the Homo sapiens’ Y-chromosome had “completely replaced the original Neanderthal Y chromosome sometime between 370,000 and 100,000 years ago.” DNA double helix molecules and chromosomes: the forensic evidence that proves early human interbreeding and when. **A Re-examination Of Early Human Interbreeding Based On Genes** The X and Y chromosomes are the two sex chromosomes in mammals, including humans, and they determine the biological sex of an individual. Females inherit an X chromosome from the father for a XX genotype, while males inherit a Y chromosome from the father for a XY genotype. Only mothers can pass on the X chromosome.

The new paper by evolutionary geneticists Martin Petr and Janet Kelso, from the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology , presents details of their team’s new method of sequencing Y-chromosome DNA, in their quest to understand early human interbreeding. The study results were based on Y-chromosome DNA sequencing of “two Denisovans and three Neanderthals

samples gathered from sites in France, Russia and Spain dating between 38,000 to 53,000 years ago." The results confirm early human interbreeding with these two species of hominins. But the results of the study also indicate that these prehistoric sexual encounters resulted in "a really complicated population history spanning thousands of years and several continents.

" Modern Human DNA Entered The Neanderthal Population Slowly

Archaeologists and anthropologists have discovered several bones, which when gene sequenced, prove that a Neanderthal and a Denisovan had mated. Previous studies of non-sex chromosomes have established that Neanderthals and Denisovans share a branch of the human family tree, which split off sometime between 700,000 and 550,000 years ago. However, according to this new paper "the Y-chromosomes tell a different story, suggesting our most recent common ancestor lived around 370,000 years ago." This means that a long time after the three different groups had split up and evolved into different populations, they met up again and mated again.

The paper says that "over time, our version of the Y chromosome genome ended up replacing the Neanderthal version." Therefore, early human interbreeding first occurred a long time ago, and then, after a very long break, it happened again. In case you didn't know already, an "allele" is one of two or more versions of a known gene mutation identified at the same location on a chromosome. Previous gene studies have mostly all indicated that modern human "alleles" probably entered the Neanderthal gene pool slowly. How slowly? At a speed, determined by Petr, Kelso, and their colleagues, to be "roughly single-digit percentage of the population," which according to the scientists isn't enough to become fixed.

Unfortunately, Most Ancient Hominin Bones Are Female This very slow rate of change in the Neanderthal DNA makeup suggested to the researchers that Homo sapiens' Y chromosome alleles may have offered some kind "of fitness advantage," when compared with the Neanderthal versions. To prove or disprove this theory, a computer simulation was created in which a Y-chromosome allele from Homo sapiens was passed on to one percent of the Neanderthal population. Even at one percent, the model showed that the chances of replacing the older Neanderthal version over a 50,000-year period only "shot up to about 25 percent, suggesting that whatever selective edge Homo sapiens alleles offered, it may have been tiny, but that's enough to stick around."

The exact nature of this genetic "selective advantage," which was written into

Homo sapiens ' Y-chromosome DNA, is yet unknown because of a distinct lack of Denisovans and Neanderthal genome samples. As fate would have it, the archaeological record is heavily populated by female Neanderthals and female Denisovans but almost void of male remains, and it's the men that pass on the Y chromosomes. Hopefully, over time, more male Neanderthals and male Denisovans will be found and more gene sequencing can be carried out to solve the selective advantage puzzle. But it is very interesting to know that we modern humans carry a complex DNA mixture that could only come from early human interbreeding with other hominins over a very long period of time.

6. The rise of scientific racism in palaeoanthropology

A forensic anthropologist unmasks insidious interpretations of fossil finds.



In 1913, the skull dubbed Boskop Man was discovered in South Africa. Many leading palaeoanthropologists quickly came to regard this large-brained, anatomically modern human fossil from the Middle Stone Age (280,000–30,000 years ago) as an early version of the 'Bushman' (a term for the San-speaking peoples of southern Africa). They described it as "a degenerate form of human", intellectually inferior to contemporary Europeans.

A decade later, Raymond Dart – who first described the *Australopithecus africanus* fossil known as the Taung Child – encountered evidence of past African cultures such as the Nyanga terrace complex in Zimbabwe, thought to

have been used in agriculture from 1300 to 1900, along with traces of ancient precolonial gold mining in the mountains of Nyanga. He asserted that ancient African peoples must have had contact with European and Asian empires – denying their capabilities to produce evidence of civilization independently.

In *Bones and Bodies*, forensic anthropologist Alan Morris takes us on a journey to the past, revealing such nefarious, racist interpretations of historically important fossils and artefacts related to the origin of humanity. The tour is fascinating, demoralizing and insightful. Combing through more than 100 years of scholarship, Morris lays bare how anthropologists built a ‘scientific’ justification for the low status they afforded peoples of African descent, particularly in South Africa, and how this justification became part of a systematic effort to ensure African peoples’ disenfranchisement.

Long shadow

Dart, an Australian, was just one of the luminaries who put southern Africa on the palaeoanthropological map. Others included Thomas Dreyer who, in 1932, discovered a 259,000-year-old skull from *Homo heidelbergensis* in South Africa; Matthew Drennan, a Scot who migrated to South Africa in 1913 to become a lecturer in anatomy at the precursor of today’s University of Cape Town; and Robert Broom who, in 1936, began collecting hundreds of australopithecine specimens including the first adult *A. africanus*, found at Sterkfontein in South Africa.

Despite their brilliance, hard work and good fortune, these men did studies marred by racist assumptions and interpretations. They contributed to the ‘scientific’ groundwork for the legally mandated apartheid system that institutionally deprived Indigenous Black southern African peoples of equitable treatment economically, educationally, residentially and in health care. The applications of racist paradigms informed both the official government-sanctioned apartheid system and the casual, informal apartheid that regulated interpersonal interactions in southern Africa.



A site known as the Cradle of Humankind, South Africa, has yielded many fossils. Credit: Patrick Landmann/Science Photo Library

Morris walks through the historical sequence of key palaeoanthropology findings in South Africa, setting each in an international context. The importance of these discoveries cannot be underestimated. Without them, we would have continued to have a Eurasian-centric, and thus faulty, view of early human evolution. Morris reveals where racial bias and skewed interpretations entered the scientific process. It was, for instance, inconceivable to these early palaeoanthropologists that the original black inhabitants of southern Africa, who occupied Wonderwerk Cave in South Africa two million years ago, gave rise to people who created cryptic stone cities and ancient civilizations (such as the Great Zimbabwe stone houses that date back 900 years), and conceived and occupied the Bakoni Ruins of Machadodorp, South Africa, within the past 4,000 years. These researchers found it impossible to acknowledge that the creativity and intellectual merit of ancient black southern African peoples are linked directly to the contemporary residents of the region, given these people's presumed inferiority.

Deeply embedded notions of white supremacy and privilege in palaeoanthropology did not cause South Africa's racist apartheid system, but they strengthened it. The work of anatomists, anthropologists and archaeologists routinely posited the inferiority of African people.

Challenging racism

After decades of slow social progress in southern Africa and spurred by local and external agitation, the apartheid environment began to yield under the pressure to become a setting in which the tenets of the prejudicial system could be challenged. Southern Rhodesia ultimately became the independent Republic of Zimbabwe in 1980. South West Africa was under South African control until it attained independence as Namibia in 1990. Apartheid South Africa finally freed itself to become the majority-controlled nation of South Africa in 1994.

This spurred local South African scientists to challenge the racist interpretations of the past centuries. Noteworthy among these researchers was Phillip Tobias, a palaeoanthropologist at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. In addition to his central role in the discoveries at the Sterkfontein caves in the 1940s and 1950s, he called for the eradication of apartheid in numerous academic speeches and papers in the 1970s and 1980s. Tobias also facilitated the repatriation to post-apartheid South Africa of the remains of Saartjie Baartman, a southern African Khoekhoe woman disparagingly exhibited in Europe in the nineteenth century as the 'Hottentot Venus'. Another important figure was Ronald Singer, a South African transplant to the University of Chicago in Illinois, who led the 1953 expedition that resulted in the discovery of the Saldanha skull, a key specimen of early *H. heidelbergensis*. These scholars expanded palaeoanthropology: by championing more-inclusive methodologies, they provided an opening for less racist interpretations of their own and earlier fossil finds.

Bones and Bodies showcases the contradictions inherent in interpreting profound fossils and artefacts while being constrained by a restrictive world view. Such clashes can lead scholars to develop circuitous and self-serving explanations for otherwise important, straightforward finds. A salient message here is that we must all be on guard for deeply held but incorrect (and ultimately debilitating) biases. Stephen Jay Gould's 1981 book *The Mismeasure of Man* showed how easily the US physician Samuel Morton intentionally misclassified human skulls in the early nineteenth century. He claimed, in his book *Crania Americana* (1839), that Europeans had the biggest brains, Native Americans had intermediate brain sizes and Black Africans had the smallest brains and, thus, the lowest intelligence. This was an attempt to give scientific justification to the lie of African inferiority and suitability for enslavement and servitude.

The delays in recognizing how racism damages and paralyzes science remind us how much stamina is required to become anti-racist. White privilege and presumed superiority in all matters of importance have been the norm for so long that it has become a fundamental construct of Western societies. To counter this deeply embedded narrative, as Morris does, requires courage, especially when you have been a beneficiary of these prejudicial practices. To recognize, expose and call out the racism in science is not easy, particularly in the hallowed halls of academia.

In confronting the racial typology of my discipline, the book does a great service to palaeoanthropology and biological anthropology. In a white-dominated society, people of colour often feel obliged to minimize racism and comfort the defensiveness of white people, including scholars. This imbalance in sensitivities makes Morris's insights that much more profound. His recognition of the scientific racism of the past is invaluable, both for correcting the record and for providing cautionary guidelines for present and future researchers.

SOCIO – CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

1. Neanderthal tolerance



The favorite pastime of a human being is another human being. The brain size of *Homo sapiens* it has evolved precisely under the pressure of needing to relate to others. Science suggests that there is an association between the thickness of the cerebral cortex in primates and the size of the group with which that species is able to establish a full relationship. In the case of *Homo sapiens*, that thickness is a good measure of the effort and time we dedicate to the lives of others. It is clear that a hyper-social species like ours is compensated for all the headaches that trying to understand with their peers entails.

That is why studies like the one that the magazine has just published Science on the Y chromosome of extinct human populations fascinate us. Beyond their undoubted scientific value, these analyzes give us specific data with which to imagine the nature of this close interaction between Neanderthals and modern humans, and it is the personal details that in the end, as humans, intrigue us the most. We knew that our species had hybridized with Neanderthals, and as a witness to this intimate crossing, which happened between 40 and 80,000 years ago, we carry between 1% and 4% Neanderthal DNA in our blood. Without knowing much more about the nature of this close interaction –

sporadic? stable? Violent? Spoiled? – the fact that this Neanderthal DNA had survived to our days was an unequivocal sign that these hybrid children were accepted and cared for by the group. In this new study, the researcher Martin Petr and his team identify an even older hybridization episode, between 200 and 300,000 years ago, and which as a result would have left, in this case, a sapiens imprint on the Neanderthal genome.

Finding that there was a genetic flow in both directions allows us to deduce that both Neanderthals first, and modern humans later, accepted into their families children of mixed inheritance, children who were probably different in appearance, behavior, and abilities.

Singular children who were tolerated and even loved; or children, who knows, whose differences were not even perceived by the group because from the beginning they were treated as one more. In a historical moment of so much interpersonal conflict, even warlike, between individuals of the same species; in which societies and countries build walls of an arbitrary

and cultural nature among their fellow men; in which we fight among ourselves over issues that are neither vital nor really matter to us, it produces astonishment and nostalgia to think that there was another time when not even biological barriers were enough to isolate us.

Accustomed to ascribing all the positive qualities to us, it is worth wondering if it was from the Neanderthals that we learned to tolerate the one who was different. It is also worth investigating whether it is in that handful of Neanderthal DNA that we still have that the healthy acceptance of diversity that we sometimes forget is encoded.

2. Why Caste Is Essential to Understanding Marital Rape



When the Delhi High Court delivered a split verdict on criminalizing marital rape last week, it prompted dejection and fury among many. Not least for the fact that one of the judges, Justice Hari Shankar, felt that “Introducing, into the marital relationship, the possibility of the husband being regarded as the wife’s rapist, if he has, on one or more occasion, sex with her without her consent would, in my view, be completely antithetical to the very institution of marriage, as understood in this country, both in fact and in law.” While the other judge deemed it to be unconstitutional, the issue still remains in legal limbo for now. But what many conversations around marital rape overlook is its relationship

with caste; indeed, this fundamental and violent feature of Indian society is where it all arguably began.

It may sound provocative to say that marital rape is legal for the same reason that inter-caste marriage is forbidden. But these two guiding principles of the Indian family structure have in common a unifying idea: that women's bodies are owned commodities, signifying caste and honor.

It was Dr. B.R Ambedkar who pointed out that endogamous marriages are an important means of perpetuating the caste system. In his paper '*Castes In India: Their Mechanism, Genesis and Development*,' he stated that "caste is an enclosed class."

"In Ambedkar's formulation, three operations central to the origin and development of caste come to light: intra-group organization of reproduction, violent control of surplus woman's sexuality, and legitimating control practices through ideology," wrote scholar Sharmila Rege.

It starts with texts that laid down laws for how caste society should be structured, which, in turn, cemented several norms tying caste, marriage, and consent into an inextricable knot. The *Manusmriti* lays down the proper rules for eligible marriages — permitting some and forbidding others based on caste — and in every instance, treating women like objects of transfer to maintain the purity of the caste.

With the purity principle thus established, it laid down the laws for people to abide by within marriages. Chief among its dictates was the principle of a wife's unquestioning obedience to the husband. "Manu advises upper-caste men to guard their women closely so that no other man plants his seed in their wife/woman in order to ensure purity and continuity of caste. If this control over women is subverted, caste dies a quick death," writes scholar Sowjanya Tamalapakula.

Why It's Still Legal For Indian Men to Rape Their WivesThe issue of consent itself can be traced back to the prevalence of child marriages. Scholar Uma Chakravarti explains how they were integral to the conceptualization of consent as something given by fathers, brothers, or guardians of the bride and groom but never the partners themselves. Child marriage

was thus permitted – even encouraged – under Brahminical norms for two reasons: infants or children would not be able to consent to their bonds, thus facilitating a caste-based system of arranged marriages, and infant girls would also be assimilated into their “husbands” families early on, thereby precluding any resistance. The text was thus instrumental in creating scriptural legitimacy for violent, caste-based ordering of society that depended on erasing the agency and consent of women.

Manjula Pradeep, from the Dalit Human Rights Defenders Network, summarizes it to *The Swaddle* like this: “The origin of patriarchy in India is based on caste and religion. The entire concept around purity and pollution restricts the freedom of women across castes. Brahminical patriarchy has laid down the foundation of an Indian man as a superior person to an Indian woman.”

Any attempt to change things was met with fierce resistance. Take the fact that in 1872, Act III aimed to facilitate inter-caste civil marriages. “...it had much wider application and generated extreme anxiety from caste Hindu society as it made possible marriage across castes, and across religious communities. Most important, it was registered as a legitimate union between two consenting partners without needing the sanction of the families of the couple,” wrote Chakravarti.

This Act was later repealed and replaced by the Special Marriages Act in 1954, which facilitates inter-religious and inter-caste marriages but with conditions attached that give families of either individual enough time to intervene, harass, and prevent the marriage from taking place. Once again, a legal loophole preventing civil inter-faith and inter-caste marriages effectively places consent into the hands of families rather than individuals. “...any relationship based on genuine consent of the partners, is ‘interpreted as a defiance of patriarchal authority and a threat to endogamy,’” as Uma Chakravarti noted.

These intertwining issues of caste, marriage, and consent came to a head again more than 130 years ago when an 11 year-old girl, Phulmoni, died from her injuries after her 35-year-old husband raped her. Phulmoni was the casualty of marital rape that garnered legal attention; the incident eventually led to the age of consent legally shifting from 10 to 12 years old in 1890, but this was accompanied by much furore – from men belonging to privileged castes. Many launched into stringent opposition against raising the age of consent, citing Manu’s laws to substantiate their arguments.

3. Humans found able to infer behavioural information from chimpanzee vocalizations



A team of researchers from the University of Amsterdam, the University of York and the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, has found evidence of human ability to infer behavioral information from chimpanzee vocalizations. In their paper published in *Proceedings of the Royal Society B*, the group describes experiments they conducted with human volunteers listening to chimpanzee vocalizations and what they found.

Prior research has shown that humans are able to interpret a wide variety of animal vocalizations, from cats purring, to dogs yelping to lions roaring. But to date, research on the extent of such abilities has been lacking.

In this new effort, the researchers sought to learn more about how well humans interpret vocalizations from a closely related species — the chimpanzee. To that end, they designed and carried out two experiments, both of which involved asking 3,400 human volunteers to listen to chimpanzee vocalizations and to then try to identify their

context. In the first experiment, the researchers asked volunteers to select the best of 10 behavioral categories they suspected a sound might be associated with but found the volunteers were not able to do so.

They then tried another approach, asking the volunteers to respond simply yes or no when a sound they heard matched a behavioral word shown on a computer screen. The behavioral traits that were tested included chimpanzees as they were – separated from their mother, tickled, attacked by an aggressor, being threatened, refused a food they liked, or a food they did not like, discovering a large amount of food, happening upon something that scared them or as they were copulating.

The researchers found that the volunteers were remarkably good at connecting vocalizations with some behaviors but not very good at others. They could connect the sounds made by chimps discovering a good meal, for example, or when being denied a food they really liked but were not very good at associating sounds made during copulation, or when a youngster was separated from its mother.

They suggest that overall, the volunteers were best at connecting highly aroused negative vocalizations with their associated behaviors. They further suggest this may be related to cross-species identification of vocalizations related to survival skills in the wild.

4. Cultivating cooperation through kinship

Cooperation among biologically unrelated individuals is uniquely human. While the capability for organisms to work together is by no means novel, humans possess an unparalleled capacity for cooperation that seems to contradict Darwinian evolutionary principles. Humans often exhibit traits--such as sympathy, loyalty, courage, and patriotism--that prioritize collective well-being

over individual fitness, and often cooperation occurs among individuals with no shared biological relation.

This behavior, likewise, adapts in response to changing conditions, demonstrating the flexible nature of human cooperation. In "Identity, Kinship, and the Evolution of Cooperation," published in *Current Anthropology*, Burton Voorhees, Dwight Read, and Liane Gabora argue that humans' tendency toward these cooperative traits or ultrasociality--sets them apart. They assert that components of human cooperation-- especially cooperative behavior between unrelated individuals--are unique, existing theories lack explanations for how this distinctly human shift to cooperative behavior arose and how cooperation is maintained within a population.

Expanding upon the current literature, Voorhees, Read and Gabora present a theory that attributes unique elements of human cooperation to the cultivation of a shared social identity among members of a group. The authors propose that evolutionary developments in the brain enabled the acquisition of this shared identity by providing humans with the capability for reflective self-consciousness. Reflective self-consciousness allows an individual to fully recognize their own personhood and point of view. In turn, recognition of their own experiences aided humans in identifying similar mental states in others, allowing humans to view themselves as part of a collective unit.

The authors argue that cultural idea systems such as kinship systems, provided the necessary framework for cultivating this unique degree of cooperation among humanity. Unlike culture-gene theories where group characteristics develop from individual traits, cultural idea systems provide a top-down, organizational structure that establishes expectations of behavior among individuals in a group and leads individuals to view other members as kin. As individuals are indoctrinated, or enculturated, in these systems, their worldviews are shaped. They develop an understanding of accepted cultural norms, how to interpret their environment and their experiences, and how to interact with one another.

In particular, the authors assert that enculturation fosters feelings of obligation toward cultural kin. Emphasizing linkages between psychology and behavior, the authors suggest this obligation deterred individuals from deviating from accepted behaviors and in turn, sustained cooperative behavior within the

group. A shared social identity provided beneficial advantages. As a result, the authors propose that an association developed between an individual's social identity and their survival instincts.

In kinship systems, emotions are experienced within a specific cultural context, resulting in culture-laden mental feelings that prompt behavior. Voorhees, Read, and Gabora likewise argue that external cues contradicting existing culture-laden mental feelings can result in emotional reactions. Any behavior that diverges from cultural norms and threatens an individual's identity could be physiologically perceived as endangering their survival. Group members will feel driven to punish defectors in response. This theory can thus explain why failure to meet group obligations may evoke guilt in those who deviate from cultural expectations.

5. Proving" the language/culture connection



Several anthropologist called attention to the research report produced by Princeton University ([link to full report here](#)). The headline touts the research with the claim that "Machine Learning reveals role of culture in shaping the meaning of words". My response, and that of many others, was immediately snarky - we didn't particularly need computers to tell us something that has been amply demonstrated by the entire field of linguistic anthropology for the better part of a century, and by plenty of people paying attention for even

longer.

There was a bit of pushback on these comments, which ultimately all share a certain thematic element – that even if we already knew this, we, as linguistic anthropologists, should welcome this work, and the attention being paid to it, as a new methodology that supports what we know and do. The problem with this claim is...it doesn't do that at all. And here, I have to own up to the fact that my own initial flippant response absolutely does suggest that it does, as I noted “the machines have caught up to my opening lecture in intro to linguistic anthropology”. It is, of course, true that culture shapes meaning within languages, and that we teach that as a central principle of the discipline. The problem is, what the authors of this study mean by that and what we mean by that are fundamentally different things, as becomes apparent when you read beyond the headline.

At a certain point, I hoped that reading the paper itself would mitigate some of the concerns I had, but alas, while obviously written in a somewhat less hyperbolic way, the conceptual foundation, methodological application, and interpretation involved in this paper is, to my mind, a frustratingly flawed contribution to the study of the intersection of language and culture, for reasons outlined below. The crucial issue for me is how the authors define ‘culture’ and establish a quantified version of ‘cultural similarity’.

In order to make this machine-based analysis work, culture has to be reduced to a checklist of features. To do so, the authors did in fact draw on anthropology – specifically, the Ethnographic Atlas available at D-PLACE, which is based on the work of GP Murdock and his students. There's an interesting anthropological rabbit hole to go down in examining the disagreements between Murdock and Edward Sapir, and critically considering Murdock's emphatically ‘scientific’ and mathematical approach to studying human social differences.

What I would ask the authors in this case, though, is whether they have chosen this approach to studying culture after a careful consideration of historical and contemporary thinking about the concept, or mainly because it is the one that allows them to fit the question of culture into the computational mold they wish to explore. Even the assumption that “languages” map neatly onto “cultures”, as opposed to containing multiple ways of speaking, or ‘languages’ being spoken by diverse groups of people, or to having culture defined by multilingual and multivocal practices, doesn't hold within contemporary

linguistic anthropology. Further, and relatedly, while the Princeton report about the study touts it as covering a remarkable number of languages, 41 is in fact an absolutely tiny drop in the bucket of global linguistic diversity – a point that becomes even more apparent when you look at the actual list of languages, which include 25 from the Indo-European family, 4 Turkic languages, 3 Uralic, and 1 each from the AfroAsiatic (Arabic), Sino-Tibetan (Chinese), Dravidian (Tamil), Kartvelian (Georgian), Japonic (Japanese), and Koreanic (Korean) families, as well as Basque.

While I was pleasantly surprised at a few of these inclusions (Georgian and Basque wouldn't fall in to the 'usual suspects' list), most of the list is extremely predictably narrow. Further, one might ask whether these labels even hold up all that well – which Englishes are represented here, or which versions of Spanish, Chinese, or any other "language"? This narrowness is made even worse as the analysis selects further and further for focus on Indo-European languages, because those are the ones about which the kind of diachronic language change information being used to classify degrees of linguistic/historical similarity is most available.

The authors don't justify this choice beyond the convenience level – or really, at all. Even to find the list of languages, one has to follow the links to get to the 300 pages of supplementary material that they provide. This indicates to me that they don't think their choice of languages used to make conclusions about 'universal' meanings and patterns of language culture relationships requires explanation.

A broader consideration of language at a global level would require attuning to the complexity of the concept of 'words', to the ways in which meaning is established in practice, or to the implications of things like polysynthesis in how these forms of 'universality' emerge.

To illustrate what I mean, consider how the study talks about kinship terms and alignment. For the authors, the machine analysis demonstrates that this category of terms (at least the most 'common' ones – the examples they give are 'daughter', 'son', and 'aunt') tend to translate into other languages with a high degree of shared meaning. But ethnographic analyses of kinship practices would suggest that even if the terms 'translate', they are used in extremely diverse ways. In many parts of Latin America, the Spanish/Portuguese terms 'tia' and 'tio', which translate as 'aunt' and 'uncle' are used to refer to almost any adult engaging with children, so during fieldwork in Brazil, I would often be introduced to kids by adults saying something like "Essa tia vem do Canadá"

("This auntie comes from Canada").

Sticking with languages represented on the list here, Susan Blum's work on "Naming Practices and the Power of Words in China" is one that I have assigned to introductory ling anth classes to talk about how many cultural beliefs we take for granted, such as the role of names and kinship terms, are in fact demonstrably diverse. Blum's work is a good example that illustrates how "meaning" is not reducible to semantic "content" or "translatability", but rather has to be understood in terms of social practice. In other words, even asking the question of "what does this kinship term mean?" requires us to understand how a given culture approaches such "meaning".

This starts to get at what I mean when I say that what this work 'proves' does not, in fact, align (pun intended, #sorrynotsorry) with what linguistic anthropologists talk about when they study how meaning is different across cultural contexts. There are major assumptions in the computational work that contradict the understandings of language and culture that most of us work within, and in particular, ignore the ways in which we examine language as a dynamic social practice. The ethnological Atlas material is, of course, not the only criterion the study uses for identifying cultural proximity, but digging in to other aspects of the analysis reveals similar assumptions.

As my friend Lavanya Murali noted to me, the treatment of geographic proximity and shared linguistic history, for example, doesn't really contend with the dynamics of how people interact across linguistic boundaries such that similarities can be produced through interaction, rather than as an inherent property of language – with both these elements, in turn, abstracted from an idea of "culture". All of this, for me, calls the conceptual framework that this research relies upon into question, and at the very least, demonstrates that this work doesn't support linguistic anthropologists' claims about language and culture.

As such, this is not a matter of saying the same thing with different methodological evidence, but rather saying something completely different based on an entirely distinct set of assumptions about language and culture – ones that, in fact, I work really hard to teach students to examine as ideological claims rather than fundamental truths. This even presents something of a meta-commentary, as it's worth noting that meaning doesn't even align within languages, and that the meaning of 'meaning' isn't always clear and translatable – I could go on, but you get the point. In addition to all this, I want to ask –

why this research? Why ask these questions?

This has been a central piece of the critique I have brought to my less-sarcastic Twitter comments, and that still holds after reading the study itself. The researcher interviewed makes the claim that this is the first “data driven” approach to the question, and further explains that the motivation comes from a desire to improve upon the time-consuming need to do things like “conduct long, careful interviews with bilingual speakers who evaluate the quality of translations”. The first comment is illustrative of a widespread belief that ethnography is not data, and that valorizes the quantitative and mathematical as “proof”. As many people noted, one of the reasons this raises our hackles is that we have been “proving” the interrelationships between language and culture in any number of ways for years, and this work actually doesn’t engage with any of that material, preferring instead to jump back several decades and use a dataset that conforms to pre existing assumptions.

The second point is more nuanced, but equally worth addressing – what’s wrong with long, careful interviews? In fact, one of the reasons that the list of languages used here is so limited is because those are the ones for which a sufficient amount of long, careful interviews, recorded material, and myriad other forms of data are available. It’s not clear to me, then, that this kind of work in any way does away with the need to develop that material in the first place, raising the question of what it accomplishes.

As I noted in tweets, the decisions about what questions to ask are ones that deserve scrutiny, because resources are spent investigating these questions, which means those resources aren’t available for other questions. And if resources are being consumed doing research that ignores and dismisses work on apparently related topics, it does have a negative impact on that work – so, speaking for myself, as a linguistic anthropologist, it’s disappointing and frustrating to see not only the promotional elements of this work, but to see how the project itself represents the questions that we even need to understand regarding language and culture.

6. Why Sanskrit has strong links to European languages and what it learnt in India



Newer scholarship has shown that even though Sanskrit did indeed share a common ancestral homeland with European and Iranian languages, it had also borrowed quite a bit from pre-existing Indian languages in India. In 1783, the colonial stage in Bengal saw the entrance of William Jones who was appointed judge of the Supreme Court of Judicature at Fort William. In the next couple of years, Jones established himself as an authority on ancient Indian language and culture, a field of study that was hitherto untouched. His obsession with the linguistic past of the subcontinent, led him to propose that there existed an intimate relationship between Sanskrit and languages spoken in Europe. Jones' claim rested on the evidence of several Sanskrit words that had similarities with Greek and Latin. For instance, the Sanskrit word for 'three', that is 'trayas', is similar to the Latin 'tres' and the Greek 'treis'.

Similarly, the Sanskrit for 'snake', is 'sarpa', which shares a phonetic link with 'serpens' in Latin. As he studied the languages further, it became clearer that apart from Greek and Latin, Sanskrit words could be found in most other European languages. For instance, 'mata' or mother in Sanskrit, is 'mutter' in German. 'Dan' or 'to give' in Sanskrit is 'donor' in Spanish. To Jones' surprise, there were many such words which were clearly born out of the same root. The Sanskrit for 'father', 'pitar' for instance, has remarkable phonetic relations across

European languages. It is 'pater' in Greek and Latin, 'padre' in Spanish, 'pere' in French, and 'vater' in German. "Jones' hypothesis was picked up enthusiastically by European linguists in the last decade of the 18th century. From then, till about the 1930s, linguist after linguist in Russia, Iran, India, and Europe actively sought out similar words, their interconnections and etymologies, compiled dictionaries and histories of grammar to see if Jones' thesis could be endorsed or refuted," says linguist G N Devy in a telephonic interview with indianexpress.com. English scholar Thomas Young coined the term, 'Indo-European' for this widely spread group of related languages.

But where did these languages come from and how did they migrate over such a large expanse of geographical territory? The question of the ancestral homeland of the Indo-European languages has, for more than two centuries, intrigued scholars. The issue has also led to several upheavals in the modern world, and continues to shape theories of racial supremacy. Yet, newer scholarship has shown that even though Sanskrit did indeed share a common ancestral homeland with European and Iranian languages, it had also borrowed quite a bit from pre-existing Indian languages in India. The great Indo-European migration In the middle of the 19th century, linguistic scholarship entered a new phase wherein the Indo-European languages were assumed to be derived from a common ancestral language called 'proto-Indo-European' (PIE).

The PIE was a theoretical construct, and we still do not know what this language was like or who precisely were its speakers. With the advancement of linguistics and archaeology, by the middle of the 20th century, some theories were put forward to explain the spread of the Indo-European languages. First is the Kurgan hypothesis, formulated in the 1950s by a Lithuanian-American archaeologist, Marija Gimbutas. It claimed that in the fourth millennium BCE people living in the Pontic steppe, north of the Black sea, were most likely to be the speakers of PIE. Anthropologist David Anthony, in his book 'The horse, the wheel, the language', claims the domestication of horses, and the invention of wheeled vehicles gave the speakers of PIE an advantage over other settled societies of Europe and Asia.

"As the steppes dried and expanded, people tried to keep their animal herds fed by moving them frequently. They discovered that with a wagon you could keep moving indefinitely," writes Anthony. "With a wagon full of tents and supplies, herders could take their herds out of the river and live for weeks or months out in the open steppes between the major rivers," he adds. Consequently, the Kurgan theory claimed that the PIE speakers expanded in several waves in the

third millennium BCE. “They started moving because of their military superiority. Some of them came to India, some went to Iran and others to Europe. The branch that went to Iran became Indo-Iranian, and the one that came to India became Indo-Aryan,” says Devi.

Even though other theories have emerged that have suggested the homeland of the proto-Indo-European speakers in Armenian highlands and in Asia Minor, scholars have largely refuted these claims and the Pontic steppe continues to be the most widely accepted region from where the source of Sanskrit and European languages emerged. It was this theory of Indo-European migration that became the basis of Adolf Hitler’s Aryan supremacy theory. In India, Hindutva ideologues have long held the view that the Indo-European language speakers or the Aryans spread out from the subcontinent elsewhere.

The multiple migrations to India Even as Hindutva ideologues have remained resistant to the theory of Sanskrit being a product of migration, newer research from 2010, particularly those based on genetics, have further complicated the picture. These studies of ancient DNA have shown that the Indo-European migration was preceded by several other rounds of migration and the South Asian language and culture is a product of different kinds of external and internal influences. In the hugely popular 2018 book ‘Early Indians: The Story of Our Ancestors and Where We Came From’, journalist Tony Joseph claims there indeed was large-scale migration of Indo-European language speakers to South Asia in the second millenium BCE. However, he further goes on to explain that “population groups in India draw their genes from several migrations to India”. He writes: “There is no such thing as a ‘pure’ group, race or caste that has existed since ‘time immemorial’.” Yet another book, ‘Who We Are and How We Got Here: Ancient DNA and the New Science of the Human Past’, written by American geneticist David Reich in 2018, reiterated how the modern man is a product of several rounds of mass migration.

“The formation of South Asian populations parallels that of Europeans. In both cases, a mass migration of farmers from the Near East nine thousand years ago mixed with previously established hunter-gatherers, and a second migration from the European steppe after five thousand years ago brought a different kind of ancestry and probably Indo-European languages as well,” he writes. “Sanskrit arrived in the subcontinent around 1800 BCE at a time when there were already pre-existing languages here. These pre-existing languages were fairly developed, capable of producing philosophy and poetry,” says Devy. Devy explains how ancient Sanskrit developed in India in collaboration with these pre-existing

languages. A good example to mention here is the addition of the sound 'ri' to Sanskrit, that produces words such as 'rishi', 'richa' and 'ritu'. "This sound is not present in Indo-Iranian languages.

It is derived from the ancient mother of Assamese language that was already existing in India," says Devy. Yet another instance of Sanskrit borrowing from pre-existing languages in India is that of 'sandhi', or compound words. "Take the example of 'nava' and 'uday' it becomes 'navyodaya'. This feature of compounding words, through which a phonetic change occurs in the original words, did not exist in the pre-Sanskrit version of Sanskrit. Neither will you see this feature in Greek, German or other European languages. Whether Sanskrit acquired it from an earlier version of Tamil or Pali is difficult to say. But it is clear that it did acquire this feature after coming to the Indian subcontinent," explains Devy. He goes on to remark that these are gifts that pre-existing languages in India gave to Sanskrit.

PAPER - 2

INDIAN & TRIBAL ANTHROPOLOGY

1. Pahari ethnic community added to Scheduled Tribes list of Jammu and Kashmir



National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) has cleared the way for the inclusion of the 'Pahari ethnic group' in the Scheduled Tribes list of the UT of Jammu and Kashmir.

Background

- The suggestion for inclusion had come from the commission set up for socially and educationally backward classes in the Union Territory, headed by Justice (Retd.) G.D. Sharma.
- Later the Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs sought opinions and views of the ST commission on the proposal to include four communities in the ST list of Jammu and Kashmir.
- In response, the ST commission has shown green-lit to the proposal for inclusion of the '**Pahari ethnic group**', **Paddari tribe**", "**Koli**", and "**Gadda Brahman**" communities in the ST list of J&K.

- Currently, Jammu and Kashmir have 12 communities that have been notified as STs.

Resentment of Gujjars and Bakarwals:

- Pir Panjal valley is also home to Gujjars and Bakarwals, and the possibility of inclusion of Paharis in the ST list has been looked at as diluting their share of benefits.

Scheduled Tribes in India

- The term '**Scheduled Tribes**' first appeared in the Constitution of India. **Article 366 (25)** defined scheduled tribes as "such tribes or tribal communities or parts of or groups within such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under **Article 342** to be Scheduled Tribes for the purposes of this constitution".
- **Article 342**, which is reproduced below, prescribes the procedure to be followed in the matter of specification of scheduled tribes.
- The tribal population of the country, **as per the 2011 census, is 10.43 crore, constituting 8.6% of the total population.**
- 97% live in rural areas and 10.03% in urban areas.
- The decadal population growth of the tribal from Census 2001 to 2011 has been 23.66% against the 17.69% of the entire population.
- The sex ratio for the overall population is 940 females per 1000 males and that of Scheduled Tribes is 990 females per thousand males.

What is the Process of Inclusion in the ST List?

- The process to include tribes in the ST list begins with a **recommendation from the respective State governments**, which is then sent to the Tribal Affairs Ministry, which reviews and sends them to the **Registrar General of India** for approval.
- This is followed by the **National Commission for Scheduled Tribes'** approval before the list is sent to the Cabinet for a final decision.

Additional Step:

- In addition to the ST list of J&K, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs will be required to bring a Bill in Parliament to amend the Constitution (Jammu and Kashmir) Scheduled Tribes Order, 1989 accordingly.
- The addition will be finalized once the President of India notifies the revised schedule as empowered by **Article 342** of the Constitution of India.

What will be the Benefits of Inclusion in the ST List?

- The move will enable members of the communities newly listed in the revised list of Scheduled Tribes to derive benefits meant for STs under the existing schemes of the government.
- Some of the major benefits include post-matric scholarship, overseas scholarship, and national fellowship, besides education, concessional loans from the National Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation, and hostels for students.
- In addition, they will also be entitled to the benefits of reservation in services and admission to educational institutions as per government policy.

National Commission for STs

- The **National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (STs)** is also a constitutional body because Article 338-A of the Constitution directly establishes it.
- The Commission was established under Article 338 of the Constitution with the objective of monitoring all the safeguards provided for the SCs and STs under the Constitution or other laws.
- It consists of a chairperson, a vice-chairperson, and three other members.
 - They are **appointed by the President** by warrant.
 - Their **conditions of service and tenure of office are also determined by the President**. The **Commission presents an annual report to the President**.

2. Narendra Modi government committed to tribal welfare

The intention of democracy is the welfare of the common people and the sections at the last position. See the irony, all the governments showed dreams of development in independent India, democracy was established in our country, but public welfare issues related to social concerns like education, health, food, social justice, roads were included in the government's priorities in the year 2014. . Growth has always meant positive change and this change is visible now. 26th May 2014 became the historic day of the future of the country.

When the leadership of the country was transferred to a great leader who was from the ground, whose relentless and innumerable efforts and works for the betterment of Mother India in every breath had immense commitment towards the country. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has made the dream of "Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat" come true by tying the entire country in one thread.

The population of tribal society in the country is 9 percent of the total population i.e. about 11 crores. Tribal societies are spread in large numbers in India from Kashmir to the Northeast, especially in Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Rajasthan and Gujarat. Unfortunately, for a long time after independence, Congress used them only as vote banks. History is witness that the contribution and sacrifice of this society in the freedom movement is unforgettable. But the post-independence governments for a long time did not make proper efforts to integrate the tribal society with the mainstream of development and political representation including their social and economic upliftment.

From ancient times, tribal society has been treated as backward society and second class citizens. Despite the important contribution of tribal society in strengthening the culture of India, the country was kept in the dark. For decades the culture and capabilities of this

society were overlooked. No importance was given to their issues, health and education. By not giving due importance, priority to the tribal society, the previous government has committed a political crime. In the name of elections, votes were sought in the name of deprivation, enjoyed the pleasures of power for decades but the tribal society was left helpless. After the coming of the Modi government in 2014, like all the communities, the hopes of the people of tribal society also started to shake, their dreams also got wings. In keeping with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas as expected, the Government of India has given priority to the development of tribes and the preservation of their heritage and culture.

In the true sense, the tribal society is getting proper participation and share in the development of the country in the Modi government. Whether it is houses of the poor, toilets, free electricity, gas connections, free treatment, roads or schools, the speed with which all these things are being given to different parts of the country, the tribal communities are provided with the same benefits. Today the Modi government is working day and night for the self-respect of the tribal society.

It is well known that when the NDA government was formed for the first time under the leadership of Atal Bihari Vajpayee, a serious effort was made to understand the hopes and aspirations of this society. A separate ministry was formed by Atal ji in 1999 for the upliftment of tribal society and their development and prosperity. Apart from this, in 2003, the Atal ji's government took the initiative to ensure their interests by establishing the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes by the 89th Constitutional Amendment. The work started by Atal ji for the upliftment and respect of the tribal society has been carried forward more strongly by Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji in the last 8 years.

This seed sown for the betterment of this society during the tenure of Atal ji has turned into a tree today. For the first time in the history of India eight ministers from tribal communities have been included in the cabinet of the Modi government and five as ministers of state. The Prime Minister himself has called for records regarding the contribution of tribals for the independence of the country and their memorials are being built. The Congress consistently neglected the Northeast region which is with a large tribal population, but Prime Minister Narendra Modi emphasized the development of the Northeast under the Act East policy as soon as he came to power. In the last 8 years, connecting the northeastern states with the mainstream of development of the country, making them partners of national progress.

In a country where the tribal society has been neglected in such a way that the country which became independent in 1947 got the first tribal cabinet minister in 1994 as P.A. Sangma, a person from the tribal society who reached the highest office of the country, no one has ever imagined of that to happen. BJP has always been determined for the progress of tribal society and today under the leadership of Narendra Modi ji India got its first tribal president as Draupadi murmu. Draupadi Murmu's election as the President is a historic occasion for Indian democracy. This is the first time after the independence of the country that a person from the tribal community has reached the highest office of the country. Draupadi Murmu ji, comes from the last position of the society and has reached the highest constitutional post of the country today. It is certainly a matter of great pride not only for the tribal society but also for the entire country. It is also an excellent example of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's resolve for tribal empowerment. BJP has proved that it is the biggest beneficiary of tribal society and the Modi government works for the deprived sections.

The name of bhagwan Birsa does not require any identification. When about 300 major tribes settled in different provinces of India remember the glory story of their sons, a name that emerges is Birsa Munda, who is not only respected with immense reverence by the tribal society but also by the

whole country. How happy and proud it is for the tribal community that when the whole country celebrates Gandhi Jayanti, Sardar Patel's birth anniversary every year, in the same way, the birth anniversary of bhagwan Birsa Munda on 15th November is also celebrated every year in the country as "Tribal Pride Day". This is not an ordinary achievement but a unique gift given by the Modi government to the tribal community. Tribal freedom fighter museums are being set up across the country with a budget of 200 crores. All these things show that the Modi government is engaged in every way with mind, word and deed for the development and respect of the tribal society. A few months back when Padma awards were being given, people from tribal society reached Rashtrapati Bhavan, the world was shocked to know that Tribal society has given not one but many gems.

3. Tribal villages in the Nilgiris to get electricity through solar panels



Around 75 tribal families in seven villages in Coonoor and Kotagiri hope to soon have access to power through solar energy, after the intervention of the Madras High Court.

The residents of Jogi Combai, Sengal Combai, Ojanoor, Mallikorai, Melkorangumedu and Semakorai in Coonoor, and Anilkadu in Kotagiri, had been living without electricity for many years, despite other villages close by getting gradually connected to the power grid. J.R.Mani, a tribal resident of the Nilgiris, and a petitioner in the case, approached the Madras High Court, seeking electricity for all the seven villages.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Mr. Mani said that he was happy that the court had heard his petition, but stated that he hoped that further efforts would be taken by the Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Corporation (Tangedco) to connect the villages to the electricity grid. "The Nilgiris is a hill station, where solar energy might not always be available due to rainfall and cloud cover. So I feel that a more permanent solution would be getting connected to the traditional electricity grid," he said.

Chief Justice of the Madras High Court, Munishwar Nath Bhandari and Justice N. Mala had ordered that solar panels be installed in the villages to ensure that all homes had electricity.

Arun Kasi, an advocate who filed the Public Interest Litigation on behalf of Mr. Mani, said that some of the villages already had solar panels installed. "However, they were far too inadequate to supply enough electricity to power the homes of residents. We hope that this order will at least ensure that all homes in the seven villages get electricity," he said.

4. Assam: GNC wants harassment of Garo tribal people in Goalpara to stop



Members of Garo National Council requested the state government and the DC Goalpara to withdraw the notices served to the Garo forest dwellers.

Boko: Members of Garo National Council (GNC), Assam State Zone, met the deputy commissioner of Goalpara district and submitted a memorandum to the Assam Chief Minister, Assam Forest Minister, PCCF of Assam and the DC Goalpara regarding the recent threat to the Garo people living in Goalpara district by the forest department.

Anindra U. Marak, GNC Kamrup District President, said, “The forest department had served a notice which directly stated that to all people residing inside the reserve that willingly remove the residential house, rubber plantation, banana plantation, betel nut plantation etc from the reserve forest area without fail. The forest department will take the necessary steps for eviction. Now the people of the area are getting frightened on this matter.”

“Regarding this matter, we met the DC Goalpara Khanindra Choudhury and discussed the matter with him. We also requested him to implement the Forest Dwellers Act 2006, which was passed by the Indian Parliament,” Marak added.



The GNC delegates including Arbithson G. Momin, President GNC Assam State Zone, Anindra U. Marak, GNC Kamrup District President, James Sangma, President of Garo Youth Council and Garo villagers met the Deputy Commissioner.

Arbithson G. Momin, President of GNC Assam State Zone, said, “We come to know and see that the forest range officers of different ranges under Goalpara district have pasted eviction notices to those tribal forest dwellers. This is a gross violation of Indian Law and the Parliament’s Act of 2006.”

Marak said, “Goalpara DC Khanindra Choudhury assured that the district administration will take necessary action and will discuss the matter with the forest department.”

Divisional Forest Officer (DFO), Goalpara, Jitendra Kumar said, “Our survey against encroachment is under process. After finishing the survey, we will take necessary action against encroachment.”

DFO Goalpara also added that the 56 Forest Reserve area and 47 Proposed Reserve area falls under the Goalpara Divisional Forest Office and around 80% of encroachment is plantation-type encroachment. GNC body requested the Assam state government and the DC Goalpara to withdraw the notices served upon the Garo forest dwellers, those who are residing there since time immemorial, and instead give them permission to settle in the forest without harming the trees and forest of respective areas.

5. Modi calls for road map to develop Mangarh Dham as a global tribal destination

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi called for preparing a roadmap to develop Mangarh Dham in Rajasthan's Banswara district as a tribal destination with a prominent identity at the global level.
- **Mangarh Dham**, situated near the Rajasthan-Gujarat border, is known for massacre of tribals by the British Indian Army in 1913.
- About Mangarh Massacre (Historical background, Reasons, Bhil Tribe)
- News Summary

Mangarh Massacre

- In **November 1913**, soldiers of the British Indian Army fired indiscriminately on Bhil protesters who were demanding the **abolition of bonded labour**.
- Approximately 1,500 Bhil tribals and forest dwellers died in the incident which came to be known as the Mangarh massacre.
- The movement was led by **Guru Govindgiri** who raised a front against local rulers who were forcing the Bhils into unpaid labour, to pay heavy taxes and high rates of land revenue.
- According to the book '**A History of Rajasthan**', Govindgiri's representatives submitted a charter of demands and a list of grievances against the Rajput States after which the British called upon the Bhils to leave Mangarh Hill before November 15, 1913.
- When that didn't happen, the princely kingdoms of nearby Dungarpur, Banswara and Sunth pressured the colonial government who then sent in the Mewar Bhil Corps to attack the Mangarh Hill.

- In 1952, an annual fair was instituted in Mangarh in memory of Guru Govindgiri and his disciples.

Bhil Tribe

- Bhils are considered as one of the oldest tribe in India.
- Once they were the ruler in parts of **Rajasthan, Gujarat, Malwa, Madhya Pradesh** and **Bihar**.
- They are a cross section of great Munda race and a wild tribe of India.
- Bhils could be identified as one of the Dravidian racial tribe of Western India and belong to **Australoid** group of tribes.
- They speak a language of Dravidian origin. Bhils are Hindus by religion.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed a public meeting at Mangarh Dham to mark the anniversary of the Mangarh massacre and commemorate tribal leader and social reformer Guru Govindgiri.
 - Mangarh Dham is located in Rajasthan's Banswara district.
- At the event, Prime Minister declared Mangarh Dham as a **National Monument**.
- PM Modi said the memorial raised at the place was a symbol of bravery and sacrifice of tribals.
- He said such an impactful event of the freedom struggle had not found its place in the history books because of "unfortunate circumstances".
- Modi said since Mangarh Dham was a shared heritage of the people of Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, the governments of the four States could work together and prepare a roadmap to bring the memorial site on the world map.

6. Anthropological Survey of India builds tribal hut replicas to promote the unique heritage



The Anthropological Survey of India (AnSI) has recreated the huts of several communities at its different regional centers.

Highlights

- These huts have come up outside five regional centers of AnSI in consultation with the local communities.
- The huts are not only authentic in design, and built using the **same materials used by the tribal people**, but also contain artefacts that they use, thus offering a rare glimpse into the lives of these communities who reside in locations that are not easily accessible to others.
 - The **traditional Jarawa hut, called a chadda**, has traditional **baskets, bows and arrows, and other artefacts used by the community**.
 - **The Shompen hut** contains a store of a paste made using the pandanus fruit which members of the tribe eat when there is the shortage of food.

Dorla tribal community's home

- They can be found at **Jagdalpur in Chhattisgarh**.
- Members of the community participated in plastering **mud over the bamboo wattle or slender twigs used for the side walls** while using date palm leaves to thatch the hut.

Mawbyinna or Mawnam

- It belongs to Khasi culture.
- It consists of **three upright stones** with a **flat table stone in front**, and the **Maw Shongthait which are flat table stones**, accompanied by vertical stones which serve as seats for weary travelers.

Jarawas

- They are **indigenous people of the Andaman Islands in India**.
- They live in **parts of South Andaman and Middle Andaman Islands**, and their present numbers are estimated at between 250–400 individuals.
- They have largely **shunned interaction with outsiders**, and many particulars of their society, culture, and traditions are poorly understood.
- They are **recognized as an Adivasi group in India**.
- Along with other indigenous Andamanese peoples, **they have inhabited the islands for several thousand years**.
- There is some indication that the **Jarawa regarded the now-extinct Jangil tribe as a parent tribe from which they split centuries or millennia ago**, even though the Jarawa outnumbered (and eventually out-survived) the Jangil.
 - The Jangil (also called the Rutland Island Aka Bea) were presumed extinct by 1931.
- The Jarawa are a **designated Scheduled Tribe in India**.

Betta Kuruba

- The tribe lives in the **hilly regions of Karnataka** and is one of the few indigenous communities of the Nilgiris.
- Traditionally, the Kuruba people **drew sustenance from hunting, gathering, and collecting wild honey**.

Anthropological Survey of India

- It was **founded in 1945 in Varanasi**.
- It is **headquartered in Kolkata** and has branches in Port Blair (Andaman and Nicobar), Shillong, Dehra Dun, Udaipur, Nagpur, and Mysore.
- It is a premier **research institute for anthropological research in bio-cultural studies**.
- It is also recognised as one of the most advanced centres for research and training in anthropology and allied disciplines.

- It endeavours to bring in a **multi-disciplinary approach, with both social/cultural and physical/biological divisions.**
- Under the Cultural Anthropology division, there are **Linguistics, Human Ecology, Psychology, and Museum sections.**

Principal Objectives

- To study the tribes and other communities that form the population of India both from the biological and cultural point of view.
- To study and preserve human skeletal remains, both from ancient and contemporary periods.
- To function as a training center for students in anthropology.
- To collect, preserve, maintain and document the bio-cultural heritage and the traditional art and craft of the people of India through Anthropological Museums.
- To publish the results of the research.

7. Forced out of homes in Chhattisgarh, Adivasis now face second displacement from Telangana



A section of the tribal people who were forced to migrate out of their home State of Chhattisgarh face the prospect of another displacement with Telangana going ahead with a plantation plan in forest areas where they had settled.

The ghost of Salwa Judum continues to haunt the Adivasis of Chhattisgarh. The state-sponsored militia that had run amok in the southern districts of the State from 2004 was finally reined in after the Supreme Court banned it in 2011, but

not before it had ruined many Adivasi lives. Torn between the Maoists on the one hand and the state on the other, the Adivasis were forced to make a cruel choice between the two sides. There was no middle ground for them. Several Adivasi communities at the time tried to escape the violence that engulfed entire villages by fleeing to neighbouring States of Maharashtra, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh and what was then Andhra Pradesh. The exact number of the villagers who were forced to migrate are not known. But a rough estimate by civil society organisations suggests that the total number of people displaced from Dantewada, Bijapur, Sukma and Bastar, nearly two decades ago was 55,000, from 642 villages. This includes those uprooted from their villages and settled in roadside camps by the Salwa Judum and those who fled to nearby States.

While a proper survey or enumeration of the total number of displaced people remains an urgent need of the hour, a peculiar problem has arisen for those who settled on forest land along the banks of the Godavari in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. The areas where they settled include Bhupalapalli, Mancherial, Adilabad, Mahabubabad, Khammam and Bhadrachalam in Telangana. Some estimates suggest that people from 262 settlements were settled in four districts of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana comprising 6,721 families.

When the groups had first migrated, there were stray incidents of Forest Department officials and the police torching homes, beating the men, and tying the women to trees in a bid to evict them. Some of them practise “podu” or slash-and-burn cultivation while others try to sell forest products. But owing to lack of marketing skills, they are barely able to subsist. But over the past many years, they have largely managed to carve out a life and livelihood for themselves in the area. That is, until the Chief Minister of Telangana, K. Chandrashekhara Reddy, announced a plantation programme known as Haritha Haram. In the past three months, almost the entire land on which the displaced Adivasis of Chhattisgarh had settled was snatched back by the State authorities, displacing them all over again.

This is in contravention of a 2018 High Court order that said that the Adivasis should be protected until a long-term solution was found for them. While hearing writ petitions on the matter, a Bench of the Chief Justice of the Hyderabad High Court, Justice Thottathil B. Radhakrishnan, and Justice S.V. Bhatt restrained officials from destroying the huts and other dwelling units as well as other structures of the Adivasis. At the same time, they restrained the

Adivasis from expanding their area of cultivation resulting in further deforestation. The Telangana State Legal Services Authority was directed to undertake an in-depth study of the relevant laws and available schemes for tribal people, migrants and migrant labourers that could benefit the inhabitants of the area in terms of health, education and poverty alleviation.

Need for identification documents

On April 6, a group of 100 Adivasis travelled to Delhi to voice their grief and catch the government's eye. Since it is an inter-State issue, they believe that the Central government can take steps to rehabilitate them. Kartam Kossa, a member of the delegation and chief of the Valasa Adivasilu Samakhya (VAS), an association for displaced tribal people, said that apart from addressing the urgent issue of the Forest Department bulldozing their huts and asking them to vacate the land, they would like the Central government to focus on identification documents, which the local authorities are refusing to give them. They are members of the Gottha Koya tribe with shared cultural traits with the Gutthi Koya tribe of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

Yet they are being refused the Scheduled Tribe status because of a difference in the name. It is now 17-18 years since they made Andhra Pradesh and Telangana their home, and they have managed to secure all other identification documents such as Adhaar, but they are being denied S.T. status. This makes it difficult for their children to secure admission in schools or to avail themselves of reservation in jobs. Mandvi Girish, another member of the delegation and treasurer of VAS, said that they would attempt to meet the Home Minister and ask for his intervention in the matter. But the delegation was unable to do so .

'Bastar Files'

Addressing a press conference on the matter, the activist-politician Yogendra Yadav said that there was no dispute about the fact that the Adivasis had to flee the violence between naxal and government forces, but the problem could not be solved until there was a political will to solve it. "Displacement in India is a pre-Independence fact but of late there is sympathy towards it, which is good. Perhaps if we termed the issue Bastar Files (ala *Kashmir Files*), the Adivasis may find more sympathisers. But if we have to talk about displacement, we should talk about all displacements within the country. There is no dispute that these are

citizens of the country and not people from outside. One can argue for and against people from Bangladesh, but there is no argument here. The country should accept that they are our citizens who were forced to flee and it is the government's responsibility to rehabilitate them. Four or five State governments are involved. The Central government has also been directly responsible for what happened in Bastar. So, they should begin by acknowledging the fact that this happened and start from there."

Shubhranshu Chaudhary, convenor of the New Peace Process in Chhattisgarh, had led a delegation of over 100 Adivasis to meet Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel earlier in April. Baghel gave the group a patient hearing and promised to help those who want to return with resettlements plans around security camps. He suggested the setting up of new villages around the camps where they would be secure from the naxal forces. But rehabilitation of the villagers back in their villages or around security camps is a tricky issue.

It is common knowledge that due to the security forces' excesses for many years, the villagers fear them as much as they fear the naxals and this assurance does not ring true for those who have been witness to or at the receiving end of the security forces' violence in the past. Besides, many of the Adivasis are reluctant to go back to their villages, fearing retribution from the naxals, if they are still there. There is a palpable fear of the years spent in the cross hairs of the naxal-state violence in the minds of the Adivasis and unless they are sufficiently reassured, some of them might choose to stay on in the places where they have migrated to.

Two key demands

According to Shubhranshu Chaudhary, Adivasis have two key demands at the moment. First, they want the Central government to provide cash compensation and devise a rehabilitation plan similar to the one created for the Bru tribal people of Mizoram who fled ethnic violence in 1995. From 2010, the government made several attempts to resettle the Brus in Mizoram and in 2020 an agreement of Bru settlement in Tripura was signed by Tripura, Mizoram, the Central government and the Bru organisations. Secondly, the government needs to take recourse to existing laws to address the problem of the displaced Adivasis. Clause 3(1)(m) of the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, confers the right to in-situ rehabilitation including alternative land in cases where the Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers have been illegally evicted or displaced from forest

land of any description without being given legal entitlement to rehabilitation prior to December 13, 2005. When the Adivasis met Bhupesh Baghel, they filed 1086 forms and handed them to him, seeking in-situ rehabilitation under the FRA, said Shubhranshu Chaudhary. He added that 152 families had expressed an interest in taking up the Chief Minister's offer of returning to Chhattisgarh.

Some Adivasis want to stay on in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana while others want to return to Chhattisgarh. An enumeration of who wants what should be done and a rehabilitation plan needs devised accordingly, he added.

Need for national policy

Professor Nandini Sundar, who filed the petition in the Supreme Court that finally led to the ban on Salwa Judum, said that there was a need for the formulation of a national policy for Internally Displaced Persons. For all the injustices that took place on Adivasis in Bastar since 2004, piecemeal settlements would not do but a comprehensive peace settlement is required, she said. "Since 2002, there has been a demand for a national-level policy on internally displaced persons regardless of their religion, ethnicity, tribe, caste, and so on. Scheduled Tribe is a special responsibility of the state. The Lambadas who migrated from other States were given S.T. status in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, so why not the Koyas of Chhattisgarh? Surveys should be done to provide compensation to all those who suffered in the Salwa Judum violence.

In Tadmetla, where 76 people died, in Timapur and Morpalli villages which were burnt, in Sarkeguda [where some residents were killed in an "encounter" in 2012], and in Edesmeta, where the CBI [Central Bureau of Investigation] found security forces guilty in the violence in which some village residents were killed in 2013, nobody has got any compensation. A comprehensive peace settlement needs to be done for all the violence and injustices faced by the people."

Shubhranshu Chaudhary said that if something was not done to address their issues, Adivasis would end up as slum dwellers in the cities of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana in the future. Kartam Kossa, however, said it was not possible for the Adivasis to live in cities. "We want to stay in the jungle. In the cities how will we keep cattle or find the wood to build our homes? In the jungle we know how to treat the illnesses that we get by sourcing jadibooti [medicinal herbs] from various plants and trees. How will we even treat ourselves in the city?"

The government, meanwhile, has been sending out mixed signals. It has been reliably learnt that while the Union Minister for Tribal Affairs Arjun Munda was initially in favour of rehabilitating the Adivasis through Central intervention and aid, he has since changed his mind. The government is unwilling to take the responsibility to rehabilitate the Adivasis since they were not displaced by any development work undertaken by the government. But the government cannot wash its hands of the problem entirely and needs to address it.

8. Arunachal Chakmas, Hajongs protest denial of residential proof certificates

The demonstration coincided with the visit of a five-member team to Diyun, the largest settlement of the refugees in the State's Changlang district

The Chakmas and Hajongs rehabilitated in Arunachal Pradesh in the 1960s on Saturday protested the denial of residential proof certificates (RPCs) to them, allegedly carried out as part of the State policy to throw them out of Arunachal Pradesh.

Hundreds of refugees organised a peaceful demonstration at Diyun, their largest settlement in the State's Changlang district, on Friday to demand the resumption of the process to issue RPCs. The sit-in coincided with the visit of a five-member enquiry team to Diyun.

The Pema Khandu government had on July 30 constituted the committee comprising three bureaucrats and two representatives of the All Arunachal Pradesh Students' Union (AAPSU) for probing the issuance of the RPCs to at least 500 Chakmas and Hajongs by the local administration.

Under pressure from the AAPSU, which had threatened a State-wide shutdown, the State government had on July 29 suspended the RPCs issued and stopped the issuance of fresh certificates.



The racial profiling of the Chakmas and Hajongs

"The denial of the RPCs is nothing but the continuation of the racial profiling of the Chakmas and Hajongs. We will not accept kangaroo justice where the AAPSU has become the complainant, investigator, prosecutor and judge – all rolled into one. This is not something allowed in a country governed by the rule of law," Krishna Chakma, spokesperson of the Chakma Hajong Rights Alliance said.

"The first victim of the denial of the RPCs are job-seekers who are students. They are citizens of India and often go for recruitment in the Army. They are being denied the opportunity through the suspension of RPCs when a recruitment drive has started," Rup Singh Chakma, the president of the Arunachal Pradesh Chakma Students' Union (APCSU) said.

Various documents

"We are merely seeking RPCs as proof that we live in Arunachal Pradesh. This is not PRC," he added.



Chakmas and Hajongs of Arunachal Pradesh protesting the denial of residential proof certificates at Diyun in the State's Changlang district. | Photo Credit: Special Arrangement

PRC expands to permanent residence certificate, issued only to the State's Scheduled Tribes. Residents of other States or Union Territories working in Arunachal Pradesh are issued temporary residence certificates (TRCs) renewable after three years. Anyone without RPC, PRC or TRC needs to have an inner-line permit to enter the State.

The APCSU sought to draw the attention of rights bodies to the "attempt to deny the existence" of the Buddhist Chakmas and the Hindu Hajongs in Arunachal Pradesh.

According to Santosh Chakma, the president of the Committee for Citizens' Rights of the Chakmas and Hajongs of Arunachal Pradesh, the entire process to victimise the refugees started with illegality.

"On July 18, an AAPSU delegation entered the office of Diyun's extra assistant commissioner and took away the papers relating to the RPCs. Instead of enforcing the rule of law, the State awarded the AAPSU by including its members in the inquiry team," he said.

Displaced by Kaptai Dam

The 2011 census counted 47,471 Chakmas and Hajongs in Arunachal Pradesh. Organisations representing the refugees estimate their current population at 65,000. Most are descendants of 14,888 Chakmas and Hajongs who fled from East Pakistan and were settled by New Delhi in the erstwhile North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) in 1964.

East Pakistan became Bangladesh in 1971 and NEFA became Arunachal Pradesh, first as Union Territory in 1972 and then as a State in 1987.

A majority of the Chakmas and Hajongs were displaced by the Kaptai Dam in the Chittagong Hill Tracts of present-day Bangladesh. Some fled religious persecution in those hills between 1964 and 1966.

About 90% of the refugees got citizenship by birth under Section 3 of the Citizenship Act of 1955, but the applications of 4,627 of them for citizenship have been pending for years despite a Supreme Court order in January 1996 for processing their applications.

In 2021, Chief Minister Khandu announced that the refugees would be settled outside the State. "The denial of the RPCs is a part of this campaign," the APCSU said.

9. Eklavya Model Residential Schools face teacher shortage



The Tribal Affairs Ministry works towards centralising administration and doing away with state-level societies .

Despite sanctioning the record numbers of Eklavya Model Residential Schools for tribal students since 2014 and setting up of the National Education Society for Tribal Students (NESTS) to manage these schools in 2018, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs has so far been unable to fix the teacher shortage faced across 378 of such schools that are currently functional.

According to the data gathered by the Ministry, just about 4,000 teachers have been appointed across the 378 schools, of which nearly 70 per cent are either contractual teachers or on deputation from state government schools.

According to the guidelines issued to states in 2020 by NESTS, each school had been recommended to have a total of 52 staffers, of which 30 were meant to be teaching positions (1 Principal, 1 Vice-Principal, 12 Post-Graduate Teachers, 12 Trained Graduate Teachers, 1 Arts teacher, 1 Music teacher, and 2 Physical Education teachers). This would mean that 378 schools would have a total of 11,340 teachers.

Officials said that the structure under which the NESTS was set up in 2018, had made it difficult for it to monitor and enforce its own recommendations to the schools as far as teacher recruitment was concerned. After the NESTS was set up, the State Education Societies for Tribal Students (SESTS) were also set up, which would receive the funding from the Ministry and allocate it accordingly.

The guidelines said that while NESTS would be responsible for recommending the syllabi, the school and hostel standards, and the teacher recruitment guidelines, the SESTs would be in charge of implementing these guidelines with room for local modifications in each of these areas.

“The guidelines never mandated that the state societies must follow our recommendations, which were made considering the minimum requirements to maintain a standard education quality and uniformity across schools,” a senior Ministry official said.

Officials added the Ministry had found that leaving the teacher recruitment to the states was leading to a non-uniformity in the quality of teachers, not enough recruitment happening in reserved positions, and a large number of schools recruiting teachers contractually, in a bid to save on the salary expenses, which was resulting in large gaps in the salaries of teachers working at the same level, discouraging many qualified teachers from even applying. These are the same problems that the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Research and Training Institute in Odisha had identified at EMRSs in an official report in 2015.

‘Overhauling the administrative structure’

The Ministry of Tribal Affairs concluded that the only way to solve the teacher shortage and bring uniformity in the teaching standards was to completely overhaul the administrative structure under which the EMRSs were run and to change it to the model that was followed by the Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas (JNVs), Chairman of NESTS Asit Gopal told The Hindu.

He explained that this would entail scrapping all SESTs, and setting up of Regional Offices under the direct control of NESTS. Following this, once the staffers were sanctioned at the ROs, the NESTS would be able to directly sanction the number of teaching positions and recruit as per the Central reservation policies, by which the schools would be bound.

A proposal in this regard has already been sent from the MoTA to the Department of Expenditure of the Union Finance Ministry. But even after the Expenditure department approves it, it would take anywhere between one or two years for NESTS to start recruiting teachers under the new process, until when the current process would continue affecting the quality of education the students were receiving at the schools, officials said.

“Taking a fine-tooth comb”

In a bid to get a head start on the teacher recruitment, the Ministry had last year advertised 3,400 teaching positions across EMRSs in around 15 states and UTs, to be filled by a test conducted by the National Testing Agency. But soon, the test for these positions was put on hold due to COVID-19, forcing the NESTS to take a fine-tooth comb to the guidelines, after which they decided to cancel the recruitment altogether early this year.

“The guidelines under which we currently operate had several unknowns. For instance, we did not understand whether the teachers recruited this way would be paid as per the Centre’s pay scale or states’. Also, we figured that some states have reservations for domiciles, which would become a problem if all the teachers were to be recruited by the Centre. And thirdly, there was confusion about whether the reservation policy would be that of the Centre or of the states,” a NESTS official said.

Of the total sanctioned strength of 684 EMRSs, 503 were sanctioned since 2014-15, as part of Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s call to have at least one of these schools in each district with over 50% tribal population. Last year, the PM had said that his government intended to have a total of 750 EMRSs keeping with the Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav campaign.

However, of the schools sanctioned since 2014, less than half (212) were currently functional, as per the Ministry’s records. Among those, 46 schools had their own buildings and the rest operated from the rented or other government buildings either because the construction of the schools was incomplete or had not even started. In the 378 functional EMRSs currently, a little over 1.05 lakh students were enrolled as of March 31 this year.

10. POCSO Act forces Adivasis in the Nilgiris into conflict with law, say activists

Youth under the age of 18 years in relationships within or outside marriage run foul of the stringent provisions of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act

Kannan (name changed), a 19-year-old youth from an Adivasi community in Gudalur in the Nilgiris, was in love with 17-year-old Sumathi (name changed)

from the same community, when he was charged by the All-Women Police for sexually assaulting his girlfriend, who he has been living with for the last year-and-a-half. Kannan, from an underprivileged Adivasi background, claims to not have been aware of the laws protecting young girls from being unlawfully married off prior to the age of 18, and though both he and his girlfriend are now of legally marriageable age, Kannan faces a long prison term as he was booked under Sections of the stringent Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.

Kannan is believed to be among 10 Adivasi youths from Gudalur and Pandalur taluks, who have cases pending against them in the courts under various sections of the POCSO Act, the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, and even kidnapping. "Kannan is accused of kidnapping the girl on his motorcycle. How can any girl be kidnapped on a motorcycle and travel for a distance of 26 km as alleged in the FIR (First Information Report) filed against him?" G. Malaichamy, a lawyer handling such cases and defending members of Adivasi communities in court, said.

K.T.Subramanian, the secretary of the Adivasi Munnetra Sangam and the ASHWINI-Gudalur Adivasi Hospital, said that child marriage was prevalent among certain Adivasi groups in the Nilgiris. He said that the accused boy is in most cases was around 17 or 18 years of age, and in a relationship with a minor girl. "In most cases, the families agree to get the couple married, but when the girl becomes pregnant and visits the village health nurse, and they find out that she is a minor, or was married before she turned 18, they inform child welfare services or the local police," Mr. Subramanian said, adding that in many cases, the accused and the victim were from the same community, and were completely unaware of the laws.

"To strengthen the case against the youths, the local police also sometimes exaggerate the offences and use terms like 'repeated sexual assault', when in reality, sexual intercourse between both parties was consensual," Mr. Malaichamy said.

Two youths he was representing have been sentenced to more than 25 years in jail. "These children are from impoverished communities. Most of them don't go to school, don't have jobs, live inside the forest, and some don't even have electricity in their homes. So it's unfair that they are being criminalised for something they don't even know is illegal," Mr. Malaichamy said.

He added that although judges in the lower courts are sympathetic to the plight of the youths, they are invariably told to appeal to the High Court for relief. "Some of the families, including the alleged victim, walk to court to support the accused because they can't even afford bus tickets. How can they approach the High Court?" Mr. Malaichamy said.

There have been precedents where the High Court has intervened in the interests of indigenous communities. Advocate K. Vijayan, who pleaded on behalf of the Toda community, managed to get an order in favour of the accused due to the "customary practices" of the Toda community. Mr. Vijayan said that the POCSO Act was extremely stringent, and puts the onus on the accused to prove his innocence. "Consider that a young Adivasi youth, around 20 years old, gets imprisoned for 10-15 years. He will come out a hardened criminal, and would have had to serve time for a crime he didn't even know he was committing," Mr. Vijayan said.

Shylaja Devi, founder of ASHWINI-Gudalur Adivasi hospital, said that rather than criminalising such incidents, there had to be more focus on ensuring access to education and healthcare, and material progress of the communities, combined with spreading awareness on existing laws.

The Nilgiris District Superintendent of Police, Ashish Rawat, said that the police were also discussing the issue of indigenous communities coming into conflict with the law due to the POCSO Act and the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act during judicial meetings and in meetings with Parliamentary Committees. However, Mr. Rawat said, the police could only work within the purview of existing laws and they could not apply the law differently to members of Adivasi communities.

11. Tribals seek rehabilitation as per HC orders



Tribals of Hunsur and H.D. Kote have reiterated their long-pending demand pertaining to the implementation of the Karnataka High Court orders of 2014 directing the government to rehabilitate 3,418 tribal families.

They also sought the implementation of the Forest Rights Act, 2006, which would entitle them to collect minor forest produce, give access to place of worship, and burials inside the forest.

Though the two demands are being raised frequently, the successive governments have turned a deaf ear so far. The tribals also want upgradation of hamlets into revenue villages so that civic amenities like roads, streetlights, water, UGD etc. could be provided.

As a last resort, the tribals plan to launch an indefinite agitation in Hunsur in support of their demands in the weeks ahead and will also network with different hamlets to form a pressure group.

Sreekanth of Development through Education, an NGO working for tribal rights, said this was the best opportunity for them to bring pressure on the MPs and

MLAs to implement their demands as elections are due in 2023 and their votes matter.

With respect to the Karnataka High Court order on tribal rehabilitation, Mr. Sreekanth said a report submitted by a committee constituted by the court, identified 1,106 tribal families in Hunsur taluk, 1,801 families in H.D. Kote taluk, and 511 families in Virajpet taluk of Kodagu district, who needed rehabilitation. The officials have already completed the assessment and submitted a report to the government and it needs to be placed before the Cabinet for approval, he added.

The issue was also raised before Revenue Minister R. Ashok during his visit to Bheemanakolli in H.D. Kote taluk last week and the outcome is awaited. A group of tribal people met the Minister and he responded favourably on issues related to the revenue ministry, said Mr. Sreekanth.

But on internal reservation for Adivasis, the Minister said that it was not in his domain and had to be discussed in the Cabinet before taking any decision.

Though the demands were placed before all the Chief Ministers who have visited Mysuru, from H.D. Kumaraswamy to Siddaramaiah, B.S. Yediyurappa, and Basavaraj Bommai, nothing has transpired so far, said Mr. Sreekanth.

12. Odisha's Kutia Kondh tribe rediscovered a palate for the 'poor man's food'



A movement built around the **Burlang Yatra**, a traditional festival of the '**Kutia Kondh tribe**' of Odisha, has involved traditional **millet crops** in reviving their ancient food palate.

Background:

- In collaboration with Millet Network of India (MINI), a forum founded for the promotion of millet, NIRMAN started celebrating the Burlang Yatra on a large scale to increase awareness about millet.
- In the past, millet used to be the staple food for tribals in Odisha. When paddy and other foods reached their doorstep through the **public distribution system** and the expanding consumer market, tribals started treating millets as subsistence crops that they grew to use or eat for themselves rather than to sell.
- Some millet started to disappear from **the tribal food basket**.

In 2017, the Odisha government realized the importance of highly nutritious and climate-resilient millets in tribal society. The Odisha government has also started celebrating '**Mandia Dibas**' (**Millet Day**) on November 10 to popularise the crop.

Kutia Kondh tribe':

- The Kutia Kondhs are **particularly vulnerable tribal groups** (PVTGs) in Kalahandi district, Odisha.
- They live in Lanjigarh, Thuamul Rampur, Madanpur Rampur, and Bhawanipatna blocks.
- The Kondhs worship 'nature' like many other tribal groups in the country.
- Kutia kondh are mostly dependent on **shifting cultivation, cultivation of minor agriculture products, and collection of NTFP**.
- The practice of youth dormitory is gradually losing its importance but is still prevalent among Kutia kondh villages.
- **Dhap and Salap Baja** are the essential musical instruments of **Kutia Kondhs**.

About:

- **Millet** is a collective term referring to a number of **small-seeded annual grasses** that are cultivated as grain crops, primarily on marginal lands in dry areas in temperate, subtropical, and tropical regions.

- Some of the common millets available in India are **Ragi (Finger millet), Jowar (Sorghum), Sama (Little millet), Bajra (Pearl millet), and Variga (Proso millet)**.
- The earliest evidence for these grains has been found in the **Indus civilization** and was one of the first plants domesticated for food.
- It is grown in **about 131 countries** and is the traditional food for **around 60 crore people** in Asia & Africa.

Significance of Millets:

Nutritionally Superior:

- Millets are **less expensive and nutritionally superior** to wheat & rice owing to **their high protein, fiber, vitamins, and minerals like iron content**.

Gluten-free a low glycemic index:

- Millets can help tackle lifestyle problems and health challenges such as obesity and diabetes as they are gluten-free and have a **low glycemic index** (a relative ranking of carbohydrates in foods according to how they affect blood glucose levels).

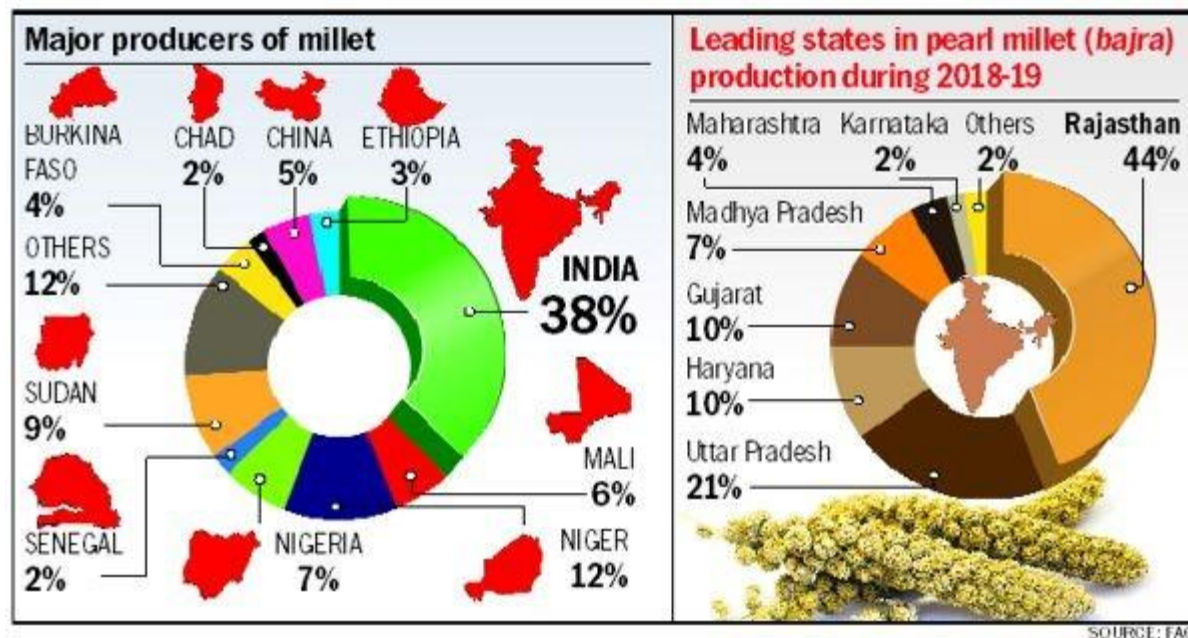
Super Crop at Growing:

- Millets are **Photo-insensitive**, have **less water consumption**, and are capable of growing under drought conditions, under non-irrigated conditions even in very low rainfall regimes.

Initiatives by Tribals:

- Tribals **grow interdependent crops** in a single field and harvest them one after another, which helped millets and other crops survive.
- The tribals also managed to revive **pulses, oilseed, and tubers** which are regarded as companion crops. Now, the community has discovered **four to five crop varieties** from different villages.

Incidentally, two species of the **mint family**, supposed to belong to the Himalayan belt, have also been identified as traditional crops cultivated by tribals of the Kandhamal district in Odisha.



Other Initiatives at the Pan-India level:

- **Initiative for Nutritional Security through Intensive Millet Promotion (INSIMP)**
- **Increase in Minimum Support Price (MSP):** The government has hiked the Minimum Support Price of Millets, which came as a big price incentive for farmers.
- Further, to provide a steady market for the produce, the government has included millets in the public distribution system.
- **Input Support:** The government has introduced the provision of seed kits and inputs to farmers, building value chains through Farmer Producer Organisations and supporting the marketability of millets.