

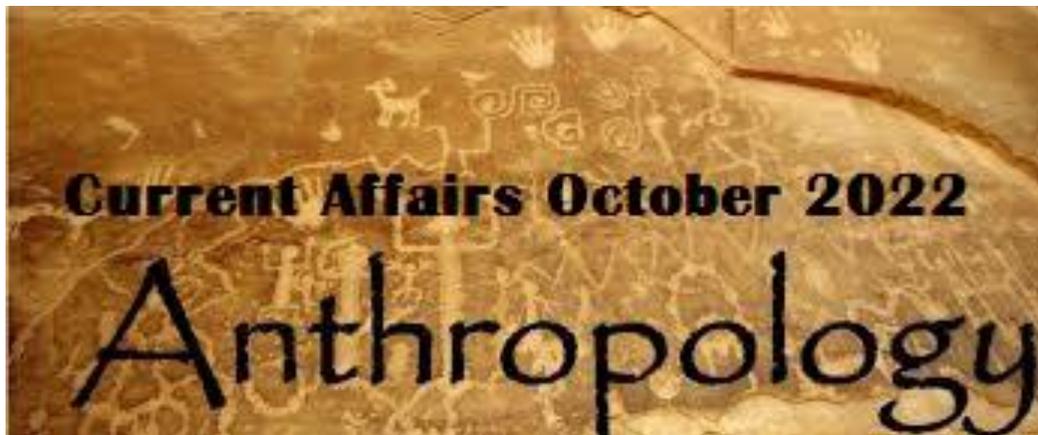
**ANTHROPOLOGY CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE
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PAPER -1

PHYSICAL & ARCHAEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

1. Does palaeogenomics explain our origins?



Why is this year's Nobel Prize for Medicine important for the study of human evolution? How did Svante Pääbo pioneer a method to analyse ancient DNA sans contamination? What is the physiological relevance of knowing the ancient flow of genes to present-day humans?

What is the significance of Pääbo's work?

Pääbo is the Director of the Max Planck Institute of Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig, Germany and has, over three decades, uniquely threaded three scientific disciplines: palaeontology, genomics and evolution. The study of ancient humans has historically been limited to

analysing their bone and objects around them such as weapons, utensils, tools and dwellings. Pääbo pioneered the use of DNA, the genetic blueprint present in all life, to examine questions about the relatedness of various ancient human species. He proved that Neanderthals, a cousin of the human species that evolved 1,00,000 years before humans, interbred with people and a fraction of their genes – about 1-4% – live on in those of European and Asian ancestry. Later on, Pääbo's lab, after analysing a 40,000-year-old finger bone from a Siberian cave, proved that it belonged to a new species of hominin called Denisova. This was the first time that a new species had been discovered based on DNA analysis and this species too had lived and interbred with humans.

How can DNA be extracted from fossils?

The challenge with extracting DNA from fossils is that it degrades fairly quickly and there is little usable material. Because such bones may have passed through several hands, the chances of it being contaminated by human as well as other bacterial DNA get higher. This has been one of the major stumbling blocks to analysing DNA from fossils. One of Pääbo's early forays was extracting DNA from a 2,500-year-old Egyptian mummy and while it caused a stir and helped his career, much later in life he said that the mummy-DNA was likely contaminated.

DNA is concentrated in two different compartments within the cell: the nucleus and mitochondria, the latter being the powerhouse of the cell. Nuclear DNA stores most of the genetic information, while the much smaller mitochondrial genome is present in thousands of copies and therefore more retrievable. In 1990, Pääbo, as a newly appointed Professor at the University of Munich, took the call to analyse DNA from Neanderthal mitochondria. With his techniques, Pääbo managed to sequence a region of mitochondrial DNA from a 40,000-year-old piece of bone. This was the first time a genome from an extinct human relative was pieced together. Subsequently, he managed to extract enough nuclear DNA from Neanderthal bones to publish the first Neanderthal genome sequence in 2010. This was significant considering that the first complete human genome was published only in 2003.

What has Pääbo's work shown?

Pääbo's most important contribution is demonstrating that ancient DNA can be reliably extracted, analysed and compared with that of other humans and primates to examine what parts of our DNA make one distinctly human or Neanderthal. Thanks to his work we know that Europeans and Asians carry anywhere between 1%-4% of Neanderthal DNA and there is almost no Neanderthal DNA in those of purely African ancestry. Comparative analyses with the human genome demonstrated that the most recent common ancestor of Neanderthals and Homo sapiens lived around 8,00,000 years ago. In 2008, a 40,000 year-old fragment from a finger-bone, sourced from a Siberian cave in a region called Denisova, yielded DNA that, analysis from Pääbo's lab revealed, was from an entirely new species of hominin called Denisova. Further analysis showed that they too had interbred with humans and that 6% of human genomes in parts of South East Asia are of Denisovan ancestry.

What are the implications of palaeogenomics?

The study of ancient DNA provides an independent way to test theories of evolution and the relatedness of population groups. In 2018, an analysis of DNA extracted from skeletons at Haryana's Rakhigarhi – reported to be a prominent Indus Valley civilisation site – provoked an old debate about the indigenesness of ancient Indian population. These fossils, about 4,500 years old, have better preserved DNA than those analysed in Pääbo's labs as they are about 10-times younger. The Rakhigarhi fossils showed that these Harappan denizens lacked ancestry from Central Asians or Iranian Farmers and stoked a debate on whether this proved or disproved 'Aryan migration.' Palaeogenomics also gives clues into disease. Researchers have analysed dental fossils to glean insights on dental infections.

Genome-wide association studies, where segments of DNA from species are compared, have found that Neanderthal DNA may be linked with autoimmune diseases, type 2 diabetes, and prostate cancer. A study co-authored by Svante Pääbo and Hugo Zeberg linked an increased risk of severe respiratory failure following COVID-19 with a set of genes that are inherited from Neanderthals and is present in 50% of South Asians and 16% of Europeans. "However, with respect to the current pandemic, it is clear that gene flow from Neanderthals has tragic consequences," they say

in their paper published in *Nature* in September, 2020. The presence of Neanderthal and Denisovan DNA in people also raised questions on whether there are hard genetic distinctions between people and their extinct evolutionary cousins.

2. Stone age surgery: Earliest evidence of amputation found



Early humans conducted surgical amputation

Researchers have uncovered the oldest case of surgical amputation to date in Borneo. The find presents a remarkable feat in human prehistory. The discovery describes the skeletal remains of a young adult found in a cave in Borneo, who had part of the left lower leg and left foot amputated, probably as a child, at least 31,000 years ago. The person survived the surgical procedure, living for at least another six to nine years. A team of Indonesian and Australian researchers have uncovered the oldest case of surgical amputation to date in Borneo. The find presents a remarkable feat in human prehistory.

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person survived the surgical procedure, living for at least another six to nine years.

The find presents a remarkable feat. It is notoriously difficult to prevent infections in surgical amputations, even to this day. Yet 30,000 years ago a community was able to successfully navigate veins, arteries, nerves, and tissue, and keep the wound clean so that it healed successfully. The individual went on the live into adulthood where an unknown cause eventually led to their death.

Bioarchaeologist and an expert in ancient skeletons, Dr Melandri Vlok, at University of Sydney said the find is "incredibly exciting and unexpected."

"The discovery implies that at least some modern human foraging groups in tropical Asia had developed sophisticated medical knowledge and skills long before the Neolithic farming transition," said Dr Vlok, who is co-lead author of the paper and a postdoctoral research associate in Sydney Southeast Asia Centre.

Studying bones

The skeleton of the young adult, possibly in their 20s when they died, was carefully buried within LiangTebo cave -- located Borneo in East Kalimantan, in a limestone karst area that harbours some of the world's earliest dated rock art.

The bones were uncovered by archaeologists from Griffith University and University of Western Australia (UWA) just days before borders closed for the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020. The team was led by Professor Maxime Aubert and Dr Tim Maloney (Griffith University), Dr India Dilkes-Hall (UWA) and

Mr Andika Priyatno from the Kalimantan Timur Cultural Heritage Preservation Centre.

The University of Sydney's Dr Vlok was invited to study the bones when they were brought back to Australia.

"No one told me they had not found the left foot in the grave," Dr Vlok said. "They kept it hidden from me to see what I would find."

As Dr Vlok laid the bones out, the left leg looked withered, and was the size of a child's, but the individual was an adult. She unwrapped the part of the leg that contained the stump and noticed the cut was clean, well healed and had no evidence of any infection. "The chances the amputation was an accident was so infinitely small," Dr Vlok said. "The only conclusion was this was stone age surgery."

Dr Vlok ran to the office to tell her research colleagues what she had found. "I told them I thought it looked like a surgical amputation," she said. "It wasn't until then that they said they already knew the foot was missing." Dr Vlok had just confirmed their suspicions. The foot was never placed in the grave to begin with.

An accident

While it is not entirely clear what led to the amputation, the individual also had a very well healed neck fracture and trauma to their collar bone that may have occurred during the same event, said Dr Vlok.

"An accident, such as a rock fall may have caused the injuries, and it was clearly recognised by the community that the foot had to be taken off for the child to survive," she said.

"It is an extremely rugged environment with steep mountains dotted with caves containing some of the oldest paintings created by our species," said Professor Aubert.

Archaeologists including excavation lead Dr Tim Maloney had to kayak into the valley and scale the enormous cliff to get into the cave, proving just how remarkable it was for someone with only one leg to have survived in such challenging terrain.

"This unique find challenges assumptions of humanity's capabilities in the past and is set to significantly advance our understanding of human lifeways in tropical rainforests," said Dr Dilkes-Hall.

3. Neandertal DNA from cave mud shows two waves of migration across Eurasia

Genetic material left behind in sediments could yield troves of data



Neandertal DNA recovered from cave mud reveals that these ancient humans spread across Eurasia in two different waves.

Analysis of genetic material from three caves in two countries suggests an early wave of Neandertals about 135,000 years ago may have been replaced by genetically and potentially anatomically distinct successors 30,000 years later, researchers report April 15 in *Science*. The timing of this later wave suggests potential links to climate and environmental shifts.

By extracting genetic material from mud, “we can get human DNA from people who lived in a cave without having to find their remains, and we can learn interesting things about those people from that DNA,” says Benjamin Vernot, a population geneticist at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig, Germany.

A few years ago, scientists showed that it’s possible to extract prehistoric human DNA from dirt, which contains genetic material left behind by our

ancestors from skin flakes, hair or dried excrement or bodily fluids such as sweat or blood. Genetic analysis of ancient sediments could therefore yield valuable insights on human evolution, given that ancient human fossils with enough DNA suitable for analysis are exceedingly rare

Until now, the ancient human DNA analyzed from sediments came from mitochondria – the organelles that act as energy factories in our cells – not the chromosomes in cell nuclei, which contain the actual genetic instructions for building and regulating the body. Although chromosomes hold far more information, retrieving samples of this nuclear DNA from caves proved challenging because of its relative scarcity. A human cell often possesses thousands of copies of its mitochondrial genome for every one set of chromosomes, and the vast majority of any DNA found in ancient dirt belongs to other animals and to microbes.



To extract ancient human chromosomal DNA from caves, Vernot and colleagues identified regions in chromosomes rich in mutations specific to hominids to help the team filter out nonhuman DNA. This helped the researchers successfully analyze Neandertal chromosomal DNA from more than 150 samples of sediment roughly 50,000 to 200,000 years old from a cave in Spain and two caves in Siberia.

After the team compared its data with DNA previously collected from Neandertal fossils of about the same age, the findings suggested that all

these Neandertals were split into two genetically distinct waves that both dispersed across Eurasia. One emerged about 135,000 years ago, while the other arose roughly 105,000 years ago, with one branch of the earlier wave giving rise to all the later groups examined.

In the Spanish cave, the researchers found genetic evidence of both groups, with the later wave apparently replacing the earlier one. “There were signs based on the mitochondrial DNA of this turnover, but seeing it clearly with the nuclear DNA is really exciting,” says paleogeneticist Qiaomei Fu at the Institute of Vertebrate Paleontology and Paleoanthropology in Beijing, who did not take part in this study.

The later wave may be linked with the emergence of the last “classic” stage of Neandertal anatomy, skeletal features such as a bulge at the back of the skull that may indicate strong neck muscles or enlarged brain regions linked to vision, the researchers say. This later wave may have coincided with cooling and other environmental changes that came with the advent of the last ice age, they note.

This research emphasizes how scientists working at potential Neandertal sites should not throw away dirt as is traditionally done, says paleogeneticist Carles Lalueza-Fox at the Institute of Evolutionary Biology in Barcelona, who did not take part in this study. Instead, he says, special protocols may be needed to avoid contaminating these areas with modern DNA.

SOCIO – CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

1. Scientists find evidence for food insecurity driving international conflict two thousand years ago

Ancient Palmyra has gripped public imagination since its picturesque ruins were "rediscovered" in the seventeenth century by western travellers. The most legendary story of ancient Palmyra is that of Queen Zenobia ruling over a thriving city in the Syrian Desert who dared to challenge the Roman Empire but ultimately got defeated. Her kingdom was subjugated, and the city was reduced to a small settlement without any wide-ranging importance. This has only recently been overshadowed by the catastrophic events of the Syrian Civil War that saw the archaeological site and the museum plundered and many monuments destroyed.

Deteriorating climate and a growing population

Now, scientists from Aarhus University and the University of Bergen are questioning the historical narrative about the final blow given to the city solely by the Roman invasion in 272/273 CE.

"We can now see that food security, always the main concern for a large urban centre situated in a highly inhospitable environment, was gradually reduced with a deteriorating climate and a growing population of the city. The timing of this nexus matches exactly the time of the reign of Zenobia and of that of her husband, Odaenathus, marked by social shifts, militarisation, the rapid conquest of neighbouring lands and the dramatic conflict that led to the demise of Palmyra," says Dr Iza Romanowska, one of the authors behind the new study.

Interdisciplinary team effort unlocks complex data

The interdisciplinary research team reconstructed the hinterland of ancient Palmyra -- the area around the city that could provide it with basic foodstuff -- and used modern land-use models developed for dry and semi-dry environments to estimate the maximum productivity of the land. They then ran the model against existing climate records to determine how much food could be produced at different points in Palmyra's history and with what reliability. In order to do this, archaeologists, ancient historians and complexity scientists joined forces to unleash the knowledge locked in the otherwise impenetrable data. The results showed that a long-term climatic shift towards drier and hotter climate caused a gradual decrease in agricultural yields, reaching levels barely sufficient to feed the budding population of Palmyra around the middle of the third century.

Innovative new approach -- new angles

Co-author Professor Rubina Raja, Aarhus University's chair of classical archaeology and director of the DNRF-funded Centre of Excellence for Urban Network Evolutions (UrbNet) heads the Carlsberg Foundation-funded project "Circular Economy and Urban Sustainability in Antiquity" from which the study stems. Rubina Raja adds:

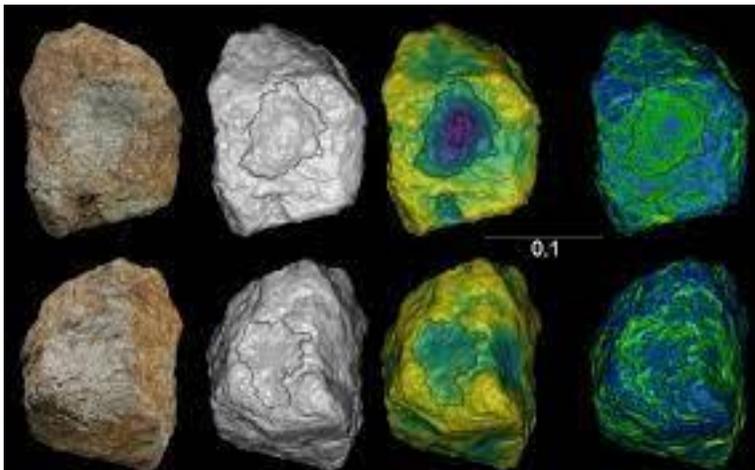
"While there have been numerous studies looking at Palmyra's history, social composition and infrastructure, it is thanks to the innovative new approach that we are able to look at the history of this important city and the whole region from an entirely new angle. By combining computational modelling with a wide range of archaeological data processed by humanities researchers with deep historical knowledge we are able to consider the circular economy and its long-term sustainability and resilience."

Learning from the past is key

The study sets up a research pipeline, including computer scripts and detailed instructions, that will enable other researchers to analyse other ancient cities and determine how often and under what circumstances food security played a key role in shaping historical trajectories of past peoples.

"This kind of study showcases that many challenges which our societies face today had equivalents in the past. Contrary to the often-repeated trope that humans never learn from history, we can and we should learn lessons from the past," says professor in Global History at the University of Bergen and one of the study's authors, Eivind Heldaas Seland.

2. Chimpanzee stone tool diversity



New analysis of chimpanzee stone tools show diverse material culture

During fieldwork aimed at documenting the stone tool use of a group of wild chimpanzees in the Taï Forest in Cote d'Ivoire in early 2022, the researchers identified and 3D scanned a variety of stone tools used to crack different nut species.

It has long been shown that various chimpanzee groups possess different tool use cultures involving wooden and stone tools, however, only some groups in West Africa use stone tools to crack open nuts. By comparing the 3D models of different stone tools used by chimpanzees in the Taï Forest to those from another group in Guinea, the researchers showed that there exist notable differences between the two groups in terms of their material culture.

The study shows that this particular group of chimpanzees in Guinea uses stone hammers varying in the type of stone and sizes, and very large stone anvils, sometimes greater than one meter in length. These durable stone

tools are widespread across the landscape; preserve different levels of damage related to their use and represent a lasting record of chimpanzee behaviours.

Stone tools used for nut cracking can differ between chimpanzee groups

This study highlights the fact that, although several groups of chimpanzees practice nut cracking, the tools they use can differ significantly from one another, potentially leading to group specific material signatures. These differences are driven by a combination of stone choice, stone availability, and the nut species eaten.

Previous research has shown, that by using stone tools, some groups of chimpanzees develop their own archaeological record dating to at least 4,300 years ago. "The ability to identify regional differences in stone tool material culture in primates opens up a range of possibilities for future primate archaeological studies," says Tomos Proffitt from the Max Planck Institute of Evolutionary Anthropology, who led the research.

It has been hypothesised that a simple technology, like nut cracking, was a precursor to more complex stone technologies during the early stages of our own evolution more than three million years ago. Proffitt continues, "by understanding what this simple stone tool technology looks like, and how it varies between groups, we can start to understand how to better identify this signature in the earliest hominin archaeological record."

3. Ancient DNA unveils Siberian Neandertals' small-scale social lives



Individuals lived in small groups of close relatives and adult female newcomers

DNA from a group of Neandertals who lived together and a couple of others who lived not far away has yielded the best genetic peek to date into the social worlds of these ancient hominids.

As early as around 59,000 years ago, Neanderthal communities in a mountainous part of Central Asia consisted of small groups of close relatives and adult female newcomers, researchers report October 19 in *Nature*.

That social scenario comes courtesy of DNA extracted from the teeth and bones of 13 Neandertals found at two caves in the foothills of southern Siberia's Altai Mountains. Estimates of overall genetic similarity among these Stone Age folks indicate that they formed communities of about 20

individuals, with females often migrating from their home groups to those of their mates, say evolutionary geneticist Laurits Skov of the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig, Germany, and colleagues.



It's unknown whether Altai Neandertals' small-scale lifestyle was unusual, perhaps due to living in a sparsely populated area, or mirrored Neandertal practices elsewhere in Asia and Europe. Large numbers of Neandertals in Central Europe transformed a forest into grassland around 125,000 years, suggesting they could scale up communities when needed .

Skov's group studied the DNA of 11 Neandertals from Chagyrskaya Cave and two Neandertals from Okladnikov Cave . The Chagyrskaya individuals included a father and his teenage daughter as well as an adult female and an 8- to 12-year-old boy, who was possibly her nephew or grandson.

In the Chagyrskaya group, mitochondrial DNA, typically inherited from the mother, displayed greater diversity than DNA from the Y chromosome, which is inherited only by males. The enhanced mitochondrial DNA variety suggests that adult females frequently moved into that community while the males stayed put, the researchers suspect.

PAPER - 2

INDIAN & TRIBAL ANTHROPOLOGY

1. Not jobs or education, tribals want to be spared suspicion by the police



Can any political party or candidate assure that e will be spared harassment by the police, we will not be detained or arrested on suspicion and killed in custody, ask tribals in Gadchiroli

Voters in Gadchiroli, a tribal district in Maharashtra, are not clamouring for jobs, roads, education, health, water or loans. Most of the tribals have only one wish, that they are spared harassment by the police. But no political party, it seems, can assure them that the harassment would cease, resulting in indifference to the poll process.

Polling for the Gadchiroli-Chimur constituency got over on April 11. But people in the constituency continue to wonder if the election would get them some relief from the police. " We just want political parties to ensure that police stop harassing us on suspicion of being either Naxalites or informers of Naxals," say a fairly large number of people.



“We depend on forests for our livelihood. But venturing into the forest itself is deemed suspicious by the police. In their view, only Naxalites or their informers spend time in forests. But we cannot afford to stay out of the forests because we collect firewood, wild fruits and weeds, timber and several other forest produce to sustain ourselves,” said a villager on condition of anonymity.

“We want the government to repeal CrPC 110 as that is being misused by the police. Police can arrest or detain anybody accusing them of having Naxal connection. They are given rights to investigate those charges as well. Police has invoked CrPC 110 against 300 people in Bharagad alone. They torture the arrested or detained tribals and there have been several cases of custodial death,” complains Pandu Mattami, secretary of Bharagad Patti Paramparik Gotul Samiti, an association of 108 Gram Sabhas.

His own brother, who was catching fish at a nearby canal was killed by the police on suspicion in 2001, he informs.

Pandu belongs to Madia tribe, one of the three primitive tribes in Maharashtra and one among 75 in India. Bhamragad tehsil has a population over 30 thousand and most of them are either Madia or Gond, another tribe.

Dadaji Kusrao, a tribal who works as a daily wage labourer and also writes poems, says philosophically, "They take away our land, destroy our forest and yet accuse us of being rebels".

Saguna Durva, 29 years old Asha worker and mother of two children, pointed out the harassment tribal women face at the hands of police.

"A majority of our women don't understand Marathi as they speak either Madia or Gondi language. They either go to the jungle to get Tendu patta, Moha flowers or other valuable produce for survival. Or they go to market places at Bhamragad or Ahri. Police stop them in between and ask them where they were going. No matter what tribal women tell, police suspiciously keep interrogating us, accusing us of being sympathetic to Naxals and for allegedly passing information to them," she explains.

Other demands

Tribal population whose lives depend on sale of Tendu patta, Moha flowers, Bamboo, and other forest produce feel that some of their exploitation would stop if the government buys the produce.

"Contractors and middlemen buy the produce from us but they keep changing their prices to exploit us. The government does buy produce from farmers and offers them a minimum support price. It should similarly buy our produce and give us a MSP," argues Lalsu Naroti, a member of the Zila Parishad.

2. Burden to bear: In shadow of old state policies, vulnerable tribal groups demand right to opt for family planning



Population indicators cannot dictate access to family planning facilities, say experts

On June 11, some 600 tribal men and women from Alluri Sitharamaraju district in Andhra Pradesh were reportedly taken to a private hospital in Visakhapatnam for family-planning surgery.

Hospital representatives had promised them Rs 5,000 each, free transport, food and stay, said Rama Rao Dora, convenor of Andhra Pradesh Adivasi Joint Action Committee, a volunteer group that works on tribal welfare.

Soon, the committee lodged a complaint with the state's Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA).

Dora told *Down To Earth (DTE)* that all the people, a majority of from Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG) such as Kondu, Bagatha, Koraja and Valmiki, were discharged following ITDA's intervention on June 16. By then, at least 129 people had undergone the sterilisation surgery.

Hospital authorities, however, denied the claim.



ITDA Project Director Ronanki Gopalakrishna has taken note of the situation. “We have ordered an inquiry headed by Visweswara Rao Naidu, the District Tuberculosis Control Officer, and expect the report to be submitted soon,” he told *DTE*.

Andhra Pradesh Adivasi Joint Action Committee has raised several concerns about the incident. For instance, people were shifted from one facility to another and medical protocols were not followed.

But its biggest concern is most of the people taken to the hospital for sterilisation surgery belong to PVTGs. In Andhra Pradesh, these communities are prohibited from availing surgical procedures for family planning to avert a decline in their population.

Irrelevant link

Till a few decades ago, several states had similar policies in place for PVTGs to improve their fertility rate. “The decline in tribal population at the time was because their life expectancy was poor,” said Sulakshana

Nandi, national joint convenor of Jan Swasthya Abhiyan, a network of civil society groups and people's movements working for health rights.

But the PVTG population has been steadily rising since the 1960s: It increased from 0.77 million in 1961 to 1.4 million in 1971, some 2.26 million in 1981, then 2.41 million in 1991 and 2.76 million in 2001, according to the *Statistical Profile of Scheduled Tribes in India 2013* by the Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs. Data for 2011, the year of the last census, is not available.

Health and tribal activists have thus been speaking against such restrictions for years. Vandana Prasad, a community paediatrician with the Public Health Resource Network in Delhi, said population indicators cannot dictate access to family planning facilities.

Denying already marginalised communities access to family planning surgeries can have serious implications. A 2018 paper on denying contraceptive services to Chhattisgarh's Baiga community notes that numbers of pregnancies and living children suggest a connection between sterilisation restriction and mortality. The study, published in *Reproductive Health Matters*, did not directly assess the connection.

Chhattisgarh, which is home to a significant number of PVTGs repealed a 40-year-old order in 2018 denying access to sterilisation for the communities. The 1979 order, passed in undivided Madhya Pradesh, prohibited sterilisation for nine tribes due to their dwindling population. PVTGs could not be forced or incentivised for surgery.

The order gave a list of 26 blocks where tribes needed permission for the procedure. In 2017, Madhya Pradesh also declared that the Baiga community, a PVTG, could undergo sterilisation surgeries with permission from the block development assistant. PVTGs in both states can also avail temporary contraceptives (condoms and medication).

But even now, surgeries remain out of reach in both the states. Thirty-year-old Dukhia, a resident of Mungeli district and a member of the Baiga community, is a mother of three. Her fourth child, born earlier this year, died within a month.

Dukhia is highly anaemic. In late 2020, she visited the local community health centre (chc) and requested permanent contraception after the birth of her third child.

She claimed she was denied because of her PVTG status. "Having a child or not should be my decision. We are labourers. I do not have the means to raise so many children."

Baisakhiya, a resident of Anuppur district in Madhya Pradesh, is just 28 years old and has five children, all of whom are malnourished. She works as a labourer and is the sole earning member of her family.

She too wanted permanent contraception. "I went to the local chc three to four times in the past three years. But every time they denied me the facility saying that I'm a Baiga woman."

"CHCs claim to be unaware of changes to the 1979 order, and so are reluctant to conduct surgery," said Harendra Singh Sijwali, coordinator for non-profit Jan Swasthya Sahyog, in Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh.

In recent years, people have resorted to unsafe methods to avail it. As the people of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh hope for changes on the ground soon, for the Malto tribe (also known as the Pahariya tribe) that live in Santhal Parganas region of Jharkhand, such respite is nowhere in sight.

The state, too, prohibits sterilisation for PVTGs. "Temporary contraceptives are available, but restriction on surgery is weakening the health of the Malto tribe," said Sujit Kumar Nayak, a project implementer at the Evangelical Fellowship of India Commission on Relief that works on development of poor and marginalised groups.

Nayak, who works in Pakur district of Jharkhand, says most pvtg children in the district are malnourished. Health conditions of mothers are also poor.

Poverty, poor access to healthcare and morbidity are among the reasons for the declining PVTG population, Prasad argued

The state should instead make family planning services available to the communities and educate them on good reproductive choices, he said.

3. Educated Youths From Special Backward Tribes To Get Government Jobs In Chhattisgarh

The move will benefit over 9,000 youths belonging to particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PVTGs).

Educated youths from special backward tribes in Chhattisgarh will be given government jobs through the direct recruitment process as per qualifications, an official said on Monday.

The move will benefit over 9,000 youths belonging to particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PVTGs) such as Pahari Korwa, Birhor, Kamar, Bhunjia, Abujhmadia, Baiga and Pando, he said.

On Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel's direction, the General Administration Department on Monday issued an order in this regard to the collectors of 17 districts, including Korba, Surguja, Jashpur, Balrampur and Gariaband," the official said.

"In the meeting of Chhattisgarh Tribal Advisory Committee chaired by the chief minister on August 27, 2019, it was decided that educated eligible youths from special backward tribal communities will be provided government jobs as per their eligibility after conducting a survey," the order read.

There are as many as 9623 such youths from these communities in the 17 districts, and sanction has been granted to recruit those eligible to vacant Class III and IV posts through direct recruitment process, he said.

Incidentally, the CM had, on Sunday, made an announcement in this regard after a tribal girl demanded a job during his public interaction drive in Bagicha block of Jashpur district, the official added.

4. Telangana CM inaugurates Adivasi, Banjara Bhavans in Hyderabad



Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao on Saturday inaugurated Kumram Bheem Adivasi Bhavan and Sevalal Banjara Bhavan which were named after tribal revolutionary leader Kumram Bheem and Banjara spiritual leader Sant Sevalal, respectively, in Banjara Hills. He wanted tribal leaders and intellectuals to make both the Bhavans as platforms for progress of communities.

The Chief Minister unveiled the busts of both the leaders and paid floral tributes to them after inaugurating both the Bhavans which were constructed at a cost of about Rs 21.5 crore each.



Addressing the gathering, Chandrashekhar Rao said protection of the Adivasis, Podu lands issue and education were among the top priorities of the State government. He stated that the Banjaras/Lambadas were a unique community living with self-respect and lifestyle. “We still have a lot of problems and only the building won’t resolve all issues,” he noted.

He stated that a committee officials was on the work to resolve the podu lands issue and suggested that the new facility be a platform to work for the uplift and development of the tribal community. He told the community leaders to have task forces and different cells to work for different sections of the community.

Tribal Welfare Minister Satyavathi Rathod, Fisheries Minister Talasani Srinivas Yadav, Tourism Minister V Srinivas Goud, TRS Parliamentary Party leader K Keshava Rao and tribal legislators attended the programme.

5. Eklavya Schools get short shrift in teacher recruitments



The Ministry of Tribal Affairs has so far been unable to fix the teacher shortage faced across 378 of Eklavya model residential schools (EMRS) that are currently functional.

Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS)

- EMRS started in the year 1997-98 to impart quality education to Scheduled Tribes (ST) children in remote areas in order.
- It aims to enable them to avail of opportunities in high and professional educational courses and get employment in various sectors.
- The schools focus not only on academic education but on the all-round development of the students.
- Each school has a capacity of 480 students, catering to students from Class VI to XII.
- Hitherto, grants were given for construction of schools and recurring expenses to the State Governments under Grants under Article 275 (1) of the Constitution.
- Eklavya schools are on par with Navodaya Vidyalaya and have special facilities for preserving local art and culture besides providing training in sports and skill development.



Features of Eklavya Schools

- Admission to these schools will be through selection/competition with suitable provision for preference to children belonging to Primitive Tribal Groups, first-generation students, etc.
- Sufficient land would be given by the State Government for the school, playgrounds, hostels, residential quarters, etc., free of cost.
- The number of seats for boys and girls will be equal.
- In these schools, education will be entirely free.

Where are the Eklavya schools located?

- It has been decided that by the year 2022, every block with more than 50% ST population and at least 20,000 tribal persons, will have an EMRS.
- Wherever density of ST population is higher in identified Sub-Districts (90% or more), it is proposed to set up Eklavya Model Day Boarding School (EMDBS) on an experimental basis.
- They aim for providing additional scope for ST Students seeking to avail school education without residential facility.

6. Kerala begins programme to train tribals, migrant labourers to read, write



Kerala has embarked on a programme to bridge the small gap in its achievements by training illiterates among tribals, scheduled castes, transgenders and the migrant labour communities

It has been billed as a state with 100 per cent literacy. But people there know they had an unfinished task. Having actually reached an overall literacy rate of 93.94 per cent, Kerala has now embarked on a programme to bridge the small gap in its achievements by training illiterates among tribals, scheduled castes, transgenders and the migrant labour communities.

Stock-taking of the activities in the past two years of the Kerala State Literacy Mission Authority (KSLMA) revealed that 11,000 students – mostly from Wayanad and Palakkad districts – are at various levels of equivalency exams among the tribal community. There are also 5,300 migrant labourers, 2,000 from the scheduled castes and 145 transgenders whose literacy levels are now being raised.

“The main reasons for the programme to have got a good response was because the trainers (teachers) are drawn from these communities

themselves, leading students to immediately correlate with them – the oldest of whom is a 90-year tribal woman in Wayanad,” said Director of KSLMA, PS Sreekala.



"We have 601 tribal teachers who are supporting us, besides retired teachers and colleges students. We have set out a timetable of 100 hours of classes where the basics of maths and Malayal

am are taught to these illiterates and neo-literates. Our aim is to enable them to integrate themselves into the society, wherein they need not feel any sort of complex that they do not know to read or write," said Sreekala

While the fee for the 100-hour classes till the equivalent 7th is free, students have to pay 1,950 to 2,250 from Class X and above. For SC/ST students it is fully free. With the scheme picking up, the respective local bodies are supporting the students by paying their fees.

Twenty-six-year-old Sunitha, who hails from a tribal settlement at Peringottukunnu in Wayanad district, said that she had just written the Class 4 equivalency test.

"Our son in the new academic year will be in Class 1 and I am happy that I can teach him to the best of my ability, from what I learned. Before I went

for my classes I could not read, but now I am able to slowly read even a newspaper. I now want to attend classes for the next level. I wish to do it because then I will be able to at least guide our son," Sunitha said.

The KSLMA has been supported by successive state governments and for the current fiscal has been allocated 17 crore, up from ₹15.50 crore in the previous fiscal. Of this, 12 crore has been set aside for the literacy programme.

Speaking to IANS, PN Babu, the coordinator of the programme in Wayanad, said that it was a huge experience not just for students but also for the educators.

"There are around 2,975 tribal colonies here and we have touched 300 colonies where we got the students to attend the basic course in literacy. We held classes once a week and everyone who attended has carried the message back to their colonies. Hence, not only are we going to get more students from these colonies but are also starting classes in another 200 colonies,"

7. Education: Initiatives for empowerment of tribal communities



The results of recent initiatives are quite visible and unequivocally acknowledged by the society, particularly the students

Education is the only mode to empower a community and help the youth to access unexplored opportunities offered by the global village. The Right

to Education and inclusiveness of educational policies have always endeavoured to bridge the educational gaps particularly among the vulnerable communities.

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Tribal education in Jammu and Kashmir is receiving special focus both at school and higher education level, however, there's a long journey ahead which requires concerned efforts of all stakeholders.

The Jammu and Kashmir government established a department for tribal welfare in July 2008 with notification to set up the Directorate of Tribal Welfare, 9 years after the creation of Ministry of Tribal Affairs by the central government.



Later, in 2015 the administrative department was carved out for tribal welfare however creation of posts remained a missing link leaving the department without basic manpower to plan and implement the welfare schemes.

Finally in late 2021 a detailed proposal was formulated for creation of posts which is likely to see light of the day this year. Over last two years the department under the guidance of Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha has laid a strong foundation for tribal education and address the gaps

particularly in planning, inclusive development and empowerment viz a viz education.

Education of tribal students, particularly in remote areas, has remained a concern of the tribal communities, however, owing to various reasons the department could not move beyond the routine scholarships disbursement through education department.

In absence of any credible database and resultant lack of planning the dormancy of such efforts remained palpable and it certainly deprived a generation of its very basic right to education.

Tribal Education Plan

The department of tribal affairs, for the first time, initiated an exercise to assess the state of education viz a viz tribal students, literacy levels prevalent among the tribal population, and based on such surveys development of a comprehensive education plan to address specific educational needs besides the core efforts being made by the Education departments.

Survey and Planning

In 2021 multiple exercises were undertaken to assess the status of education in tribal areas, gather micro database, obtain community feedback, assess the available facilities as well as opportunities and finally put in place an all-encompassing education plan for tribal population aimed at ensuring an inclusive educational landscape in Jammu and Kashmir.

The tribal communities represent a diversity of religious, cultural, social and economic practices and parameters which in itself makes the job of a development administrator complex. The surveys and resultant planning processes have been prompt, enabling immediate launch of several initiatives.

The 1st Survey of Transhumant (migratory) population conducted in 2021 threw up surprisingly disappointing figures in all sectors and parameters

of human development. Education was no different. It recorded a mere 16.74% literacy rate among a mammoth population of 6.12 Lakh, far below the national literacy rate of 74% even in the Census 2011, which pegged the literacy rate among STs at 59%.

The male literacy rate was recorded as 19.38% while female literacy rate at 14.08%. These figures of literacy in 2021-22 are of alarming nature and deep concern not only for the community but for the policy makers, development administrators, educations and all other stakeholders. This is also reflective of gaps in ensuring inclusive education and honouring the Right to Education when it comes to the tribal communities.

The status of education and literacy in villages was found to be no different. A survey conducted in more than 365 villages having tribal population of 500+ and constituting more than 50% of overall population, in 2021 revealed the literacy rate was just 29%, with male literacy rate as 37% and female literacy rate 23%. The status of education attainment recorded to be further poor.

The role of tribal affairs department is, broadly, ensuring that planning under the Scheduled Tribes Component (STC) allocated by the Government of India directly to the departments, is as per ground requirements and assured inclusive development and welfare.

In this case the efforts of higher education and school education department over last few years have started yielding results however the primary education, hostel facilities, education of migratory students and availability of facilities in remote tribal areas remain top concerns.

The tribal affairs department initiated a number of interventions to bridge these gaps and augment the efforts of education departments at all the levels.

Scholarship for Higher Education

Waited since the year 2012 the first revision of scholarship was notified in July 2022 with 125-140% increase in scholarship. This enhancement makes

the quality education affordable for tribal students and empowers them to access the best educational institutions and study resource material.

The average slab of scholarship in Group A courses increased from ` 30,000/- to more than ` 70,000/ annum. Likewise, in Group D it increased from mere ` 12,000 to more than ` 27,000/annum. Further, taking into account the emerging requirements of skilling, diversity in courses of higher education and feedback by several students more than 300 more courses were added to the decade old list of less than 50 courses under which students were eligible for scholarship.

The revision has been mandated after every two years. This signifies a major thrust on supporting quality education for tribal students. The scholarship budget of the department which hovered around maximum ` 14-15 Cr for all these years has been increased to more than ` 50.00 Cr this year, up from the highest 31.12 Cr last financial year.

Scholarship for Seasonal Centres

More than 34,000 students belonging to transhumant or semi-nomadic tribal families enrolled in seasonal centres for the period of migration hitherto received only Rs 475/annum scholarship which has been revised under a Special Scholarship Scheme of the UT Government upto ` 2400 in three different slabs upto Class-V. The department is also working on a model for seasonal centres in coordination with Education Department to develop a policy for the annual calendar of education under the aegis of National Education Society for Tribal Students

Gaddi-Sippis get scholarship after 3 decades

The Gaddis and Sippis were notified as Scheduled Tribes in 1991 however the pre-matric scholarship was not awarded to students of the tribe for which several representations were made and even intervention of courts sought. In November 2021, the Tribal Affairs Department notified scholarship for Gaddi-Sippi tribe benefitting more than 12,000 students in the pre-matric scholarship. This step is significant from point of view of both social justice and empowerment .

Hostels: Modernisation and Expansion

The first two hostels for Gujjar and Bakkerwal students were established in Jammu and Srinagar in late 1970s. the number of hostels for tribal students till 2020 remained 25. In close to last two years the department completed 8 hostels and approved establishment of 25 new hostels the work of which is scheduled to commence in August 2022. Apart from this, 10 hostels started few years back which remained hanging in balance owing to absence of mandatory administrative approval; codal formalities and tendering are being taken up this year for resumption of work after closure of unauthorised contracts and introduction of fiscal discipline. These efforts are aimed at having more than 70 hostels with the department over next two years and annual augmentation under central grants as well.

The department has earmarked a budget of ` 17.00 Cr for repair and renovation of hostels this year as a sequel to ` 10.00 Cr modernisation budget last year under which hostels have been equipped with modern furniture. The tuition fee for hostels has been enhanced from ` 1500/- to ` 6000/ per months to offer quality education in hostels while diet rates have been enhanced from mere ` 100/day to ` 175/day w.e.f July 2022 and further proposed to ` 250/day in revised budget. Ironically the tuition fee and diet charges awaited more than a decade for revision which would normally happen every two years.

The competitive edge: Coaching

In first of its kind initiatives the students enrolled in hostels for Class-XI to Post-Graduation are being given Tabs with pre-loaded educational content. Nearly 1000 hostellers will benefit from the scheme this year. Another scheme has been launched to offer Civil Services Examination coaching to 100 tribal students this year in government empanelled coaching institutions of repute and 100 students for NEET/JEE examinations. This will provide a major boost to meritorious and competitive students from poorest economic strata to achieve their dreams of qualifying such examinations for various professional courses and services as well.

Modernisation of Schools in tribal areas

Another unique initiative in coordination with School Education Department is silently changing the infrastructure landscape of schools in remote tribal areas under the pilot “Modernisation of Schools in Tribal Areas” launched in 2021. In first phase, 100 smart schools have been established across 20 districts at a cost of ` 20.00 Cr and more than 200 schools are being taken up this year to be provided smart classrooms. The village development plan for this year focuses on more than 100 Village-Panchayats for quality education infrastructure.

Residential Schools: Operation and expansion

The Government of India sanctioned Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) for Anantnag and Kulgam in the year 1997-98 and 2003-04 respectively however despite availability of funds the project completion remained a distant dream, leading to cost escalation besides deprivation of education. The department prioritised release of funds over last two years for project completion. Apart from resumption of work on EMRS Mendhar and EMRS Rajouri held up for many years due to several issues, the department also released funds for new sanctioned EMRS at Gurez in Bandipora and Kandi in District Rajouri. Besides this, in order to ensure avoidance of education deprivation, the department provided a budget of ` 6.00 Cr to make these 06 EMRS operational without further delay. Proposals for more than 10 new EMRS along with land availability certificate and willingness of Jammu and Kashmir Government to provide essential services infrastructure have now been submitted to the Ministry of Tribal Affairs Govt of India after more than 6 months long process to make the land and resources available.

Transit Residential Schools

In addition to the EMRS, the J&K Government has also initiated the project for residential school particularly for students belonging to the migratory tribal communities. One residential school has been constructed and completed in District Pulwama at a cost of ` 7.00 while land has been provided for a similar school in Shopian. These schools are designed to provide the accommodation and quality education to students during annual migration to the highland pastures. A similar initiative is also

planned by the school education department for such schools on transit routes.

Institution of awards for excellence

The department has instituted awards for meritorious students as well as for excellence in academic and professional education at higher level which includes the excellence in board examination and achievements in respective professional education at local or national level. The recipients of this year's awards include educationists, doctors, engineers and meritorious students among others.

Residential Coaching Centre

This year a state-of-the-art coaching institute for tribal students is being established by the department at Jammu followed by a similar centre at Srinagar. The residential coaching centre equipped with accommodation facilities, book bank, digital library and class-rooms is aimed at providing quality teaching to tribal students to prepare them for various competitive examinations conducted by the Union Public Service Commissioner and the J&K Public Service Commission. The students selected through competitive process or those having qualified the preliminary examination will be offered best education support system to qualify such competitive education

Way Forward

These initiatives have acknowledged the need for very robust and focussed system of tribal education, need for inclusive education and development of special plans for different tribal areas and sections of communities given the poor educational and literacy levels. The tribal communities, particularly the students, have responded constructively towards these initiatives and are contributing for development of a model education system. The results of recent initiatives are quite visible and unequivocally acknowledged by the society, particularly the students. Sustainability and up scaling of these initiatives is bound to pay rich dividends for tribal education. Tribal students need standard educational facilities at par with

national norms and indispensable exposure to professional career opportunities globally.

8. Andhra Pradesh: The Konda Reddis' preferred immunity booster during monsoon



Dried bamboo shoots are an essential part of the tribe's dietary chart as they are believed to be highly nutritious

The entrance of Kondla Lachumamma's thatched house at Dumpalavalasa hamlet of Y. Ramavarama mandal in Alluri Sitarama Raju (ASR) district is decorated with a garland of bamboo shoots.

The Konda Reddi tribal families hang such garlands to the roofs of their dwellings and dry them for a week.

A week later, or whenever the shoots are fully dried, the families store them for consumption till the next monsoon.

People of the tribe believe that bamboo shoots are highly nutritious. The dried bamboo shoots are a part of their diet during the monsoon as it "improves their immunity against viral fevers."

“For generations, bamboo shoots are an integral part of our food chart. Now-a-days, even non-tribes have started consuming them in view of their nutritious value. We collect the shoots both for own consumption and for sale at the weekly shandies,” Ms. Lachumamma told *The Hindu*.



“The dried bamboo shoots can also be stored in powder form. At least six dishes can be prepared with the shoots” Kondla Lachumamma A tribeswoman

Post-COVID, the non-tribes from the mainstream areas are after the bamboo shoots in a bid to boost their immunity. Off late, bamboo shoots are in great demand at the shandies.

“A bamboo shoot is dried for a week. Later, It is boiled and used in the preparation of a variety of dishes such as mixed vegetable curry and dal. The dried shoots can also be stored in powder form. At least six dishes can be prepared with the shoots,” adds Ms. Lachumamma.

“We serve food prepared with bamboo shoots to children of all ages. The collection and preparation of the shoots require patience. We prefer to

invest our time and labour on the ingredient to enjoy our traditional food,” says Kondla Tulasamma, a mother of two.

The tribal people inhabiting in the forest and hill ranges are entitled to collect every form of bamboo tree, which is classified as Minor Forest Produce (MFP). They have the right to exploit its commercial value for their livelihood.

9. Andhra Pradesh: Will hold grievance meets for tribals once a month, says Collector



Cultural performances mark celebrations of World Tribal Day in NTR District

NTR District Collector S. Dilli Rao said that a special grievance programme to address the issues of tribals will be conducted once a month hereafter.

The district's Tribal Welfare and Development Department celebrated the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, commonly known as World Tribal Day, in the city on Tuesday.

Speaking at the inaugural meeting, Mr. Rao said that the State government is implementing several schemes for the tribals and called upon the tribal people to make use of them to become financially and socially independent.

He said arrangements will be made to conduct a special grievance redressal programme by the Tribal Welfare Department once a month in the district. He said the issues being faced by tribals will be resolved through the special grievance programme.



He said several tribal families have been given houses in the Jagananna housing colonies and asked eligible families who have not applied for houses to immediately approach authorities concerned. Vijayawada Central MLA Malladi Vishnu said that the State government has set up various welfare and development corporations for the uplift of tribal communities. He said the State government disbursed 7.12 crore to 33.92 lakh tribals through Direct Benefit Transfer under various schemes.

Students in traditional attire performed dances with the officials and various other cultural programmes were conducted on the occasion. AP State Minorities Finance Corporation chairman Sk. Asik. Viswa Brahmin Corporation chairman T. Srikanth, District Tribal Welfare and

Development Officer M. Rukmangadhayya, Deputy Mayors Bellam Durga and Avuthu Sailaja Reddy and others were present.

Meanwhile, Krishna district also celebrated World Tribal Day. Joint Collector Mahesh Kumar, ZP chairperson Uppala Harika and others took part.

10. Status beyond faith: On SC status post conversion

The panel on giving SC status to converts has its work cut out



The Centre has appointed a three-member Commission to examine the sensitive issue of extending Scheduled Caste (SC) status to all those who have historically suffered discrimination and untouchability, regardless of the religion they now profess. It is a task fraught with difficulty for the panel headed by former Chief Justice of India, K. G. Balakrishnan, as it will have to grapple with both social realities and ideological objections while addressing the core question. The government itself has described it as a seminal and historically complex sociological and constitutional question.

This is not the first time that the issue has come up before the Supreme Court – the panel’s appointment comes in the wake of the Court asking the Centre to clarify its position on the issue – or has been examined by a commission headed by a former Chief Justice. In 1985, the Supreme Court agreed that historical discrimination may continue even after members of the SCs convert to other religions, but did not decide in favour of such converts being given SC status as it felt there was not enough material outlining their condition after conversion. It is to be welcomed that the Balakrishnan Commission has been asked specifically to examine the changes that Dalits go through after conversion in terms of their social status and the discrimination they may face, along with the implications of according them SC status.



The National Commission for Religious and Linguistic Minorities, headed by retired Chief Justice Ranganath Mishra, also examined this issue. In its 2007 report, the panel made a categorical recommendation in favour of giving SC status to Dalits belonging to all religions. It found the caste system to be “an all-pervading social phenomenon in India shared by almost all Indian communities”. It stressed the constitutional need to eliminate the religion-based discrimination underlying the present policy of limiting SC status to those professing Hinduism, Sikhism and Buddhism.

While the tenets of a religion may not allow discrimination, the ground reality was different, it said. The main counter-views are well-known: discrimination and deprivation being the consequences of the caste-based Hindu social order, SC status should not be extended to those who have converted to Christianity and Islam; and the benefits involved may be seen as an incentive to mass conversion. Another objection is that the share of the reservation pie available to Dalits among Hindus may shrink if new sections are included. There is no 'creamy layer' concept for SC reservation, and expanding its scope may be to the disadvantage of the current beneficiaries. The Commission will have to come up with a definitive study of these complex issues.

11. Technology And Exhausted Nomads in J&K



The nomadic Gujjar and Bakarwal communities of Jammu and Kashmir have been given smart cards and free transportation to help with their biannual migration.

Gujjar-Bakarwal Community Information:

- The nomadic pastoralists of Jammu and Kashmir, also known as the Gujjar-Bakarwal community, are a Himalayan transhumance community.

- Gujjars and Bakarwals are the third largest ethnic group in J&K, accounting for more than 9% of the union territory's total population.
 - Approximately 99.3 percent of Gujjar and Bakarwals in J&K practise Islam, and they were designated as a Scheduled Tribe in 1991.
- Gujjars -
 - The Gujjars are also known as Goajar, Gujar, and Gurjara.
 - They have their own dialect, GOJRI, which is a branch of Indo-Aryan dialect, as well as their own customs, craftsmanship, and specialty.
- Bakarwals -
 - The term "Bakarwals" is derived from the combination of two terms "Bakri" means goat/ sheep and "wal" means "one who cares" of essentially the name "Bakarwal" implies high altitude goats and sheep herders.
 - Bakarwals are primarily pastoral nomads who spend their summers raising goats and sheep at high altitudes in the Great Himalayas and their winters in the plains and foothills of the Shivaliks.

Biannual Migration

- They migrate with their flock biannually between the pastures of Kashmir and Ladakh in the summer and the plains of Jammu in the winter.
- Across their migratory routes, their daily activities benefit the environment by -
 - conserving local soil and water,
 - seasonally maintaining grasslands,
 - regulating the frequency of forest fires by limiting excessive growth, and
 - keeping invasive plant species in check by weeding them out.



The community's difficulties

- The Gujjar-Bakarwal Tribe of J&K is one of the most backward of all J&K tribes.
- Most habitation areas of the Gujjar Bakarwal tribe in Jammu and Kashmir lack facilities such as o Road communication, electricity, water supply schemes, medical facilities, and educational facilities, putting the Gujjar Bakarwal tribe in a lot of hardships and troubles.
- For the benefit of the Gujjar and Bakarwal communities, the government has implemented a number of employment schemes in Jammu and Ladakh union territory, including the following:
 - Jawahar Rojgar Yojana
 - Indira Awas Yojana
 - Self-Employment for Educated Unemployed Youth
 - Lift Irrigation Execution Programs

Government Community Initiatives:

- For centuries, Jammu and Kashmir's nomadic community, known as Gujjars and Bakerwals, have undertaken arduous journeys on foot as part of their seasonal migration to find better pastures for their livestock.
- They frequently lose cattle and, on occasion, family members to accidents and hardships along the way.
- However, this year, the UT administration has offered technological solutions and transport services to help them cover long distances in less time.

12. J&K Paharis Hope for ST Tag During Amit Shah Visit: A Look at Community; Why Gujjars, Bakerwals are Protesting



Paharis say they should be given the ST tag like the Bakerwals and Gujjars because they live in tough terrains of Pir Panjal region, Baramulla and Anantnag districts. While Gujjars and Bakerwals believe that Paharis are not an ethnic group but a mix of different religions and linguistic communities

The Paharis of Jammu and Kashmir are expecting home minister Amit Shah to announce the Scheduled Tribe (ST) status to the community during his rallies in Rajouri and Baramulla on Tuesday and Wednesday. However, others such as Bakerwals and Gujjars have expressed anguish over the expected move, with many from the two communities protesting during Shah's visit.

While the Gujjars are unhappy, the Paharis seem to be already celebrating. Khafil ul Rehman, a senior National Conference (NC) leader and former MLA, appealed to his supporters to participate in the rally at Baramulla on Wednesday.

Let's look at why the other communities are protesting, and what benefit would the ST status give to the Pahari community, and the impact on election.

Who are the Paharis?



The Paharis of J&K are mostly concentrated in Rajouri and Poonch and parts of Baramulla and Kupwara. They have mixed faiths, and have their own social stratification with a well-defined caste structure. They are Syed, Maharajas, Rajputs, and are mostly into agriculture and cattle activities.

They speak Pothwari language, a Punjabi dialect also spoken in the Hindko region including Rajouri, Poonch and Kashmir. The majority of Paharis live in rural areas, and comprise almost 20% of J&K's population.

What will the ST Status Mean for Them?

Amit Shah had said in Jammu last year: "Elected members of the Pahari community can now become a minister and Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, which was impossible earlier because of dynastic politics."

Even BJP's J&K chief Ravinder Raina said in a meeting later that "Prime Minister Modi is now going to solve the issues of the Pahari community. Soon, the BJP will grant the ST status to Paharis, which is their genuine demand."

The Paharis have been demanding the ST status for the last 30 years, and it is in 2021 that they could build some momentum.

Thus, the Delimitation Commission, formed under the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019, reserved nine assembly seats for the STs for the first time.

The BJP, which won did well in the District Development Council elections in 2021, and has been eyeing the Pir Panjal region that will determine the new government of J&K.

In the Pir Panjal region, the Gujjar-Bakerwal community has around 12 lakh people, all others are Paharis based on their language.

The SC tag to the Pahari community will also pit them against the Gujjars and Bakerwals, the traditional herders who were granted the status in 1991. The STs have 10% reservation in jobs and educational institutions in J&K.

Why are Other Communities Protesting?

Hundreds of college students from the Gujjar and Bakerwal communities held a protest march in Jammu over inclusion of Paharis in the ST category. People from these two communities also protested in Shopian district of south Kashmir, and threatened to intensify their agitation if the Paharis were given the ST status.

The Gujjars and Bakerwals form the third largest ethnic group in J&K after Kashmiris and Dogras.

The Paharis contended that they should be given the ST tag like the Bakerwals and Gujjars because they live in tough terrains of Pir Panjal region, Baramulla and Anantnag districts. While the other two communities believe that Paharis are not an ethnic group but a group of different religions and linguistic communities.

Leaders such as Mushtaq Bukhari, a senior National Conference leader from Rajouri, Mohammad Ehsan from Peoples Democratic Party, and several others have resigned to only support BJP on the issue of granting ST status to Paharis.

PDP president and former chief minister Mehbooba Mufti on Sunday accused the BJP of “creating a wedge” between the Paharis and Gujjars, and cautioning them to be alert.

“There is a lot of tension in the Pir Panjal region for the last few days since there is a talk of reservation to the Pahari community. Brothers have been turned into foes and they are baying for each other’s blood... I request the Gujjar, Bakerwal and Pahari communities to stop fighting against each other,” Mufti told reporters.

13. Andhra Pradesh: The once throbbing tribal habitation is now home to a colony of fish!



Seetaram, which is a part of the Polavaram project submerged area, was the ancestral home to 70 families that thrived on agriculture

Until March last, members of the Konda Dora and Konda Reddi tribes had lived together in their ancestral habitation, Seetaram, in the Polavaram project submerged area in Alluri Sitarama Raju (ASR) district.

Later, many among the 70 families of the habitation had left for safer places fearing submergence, while others were rehabilitated in the Resettlement and Rehabilitation (R&R) Colonies.

While ploughing the fertile lands and raising crops were their avocation, celebrating the local festivals together was a part of their social fabric.

Due to its location on the banks of the Godavari, the habitation has abundant fish, which the tribesmen used to catch in the canal that passes through it.

But all that was history, as the deserted habitation had been submerged three times in the backwaters of the Godavari since July.

“Our habitation once bubbled with life. But now, our houses are home to fish that swim back from the river. I am trying to erase my association with the river and the habitation from memory and move on,” said Muttavada Ramesh Reddi, whose was the only family that belonged to the Konda Reddi tribe in the habitation.

A majority of the families that once lived at Seetaram belonged to the Konda Dora tribe. They survived on raising crops such as paddy, maize and cereals. They used to go for ‘podu’ cultivation, under which forest was cleared to raise crops.

When this correspondent visited Seetaram on September 15, scores of displaced tribal people were seen thronging it to catch fish from the submerged habitation which was once their home.



The youth who were fishing hailed from the affected habitations such as Nagulappali, Seetaram, Ganugulagudem, Gangapalem, Dandangi, Moolapadu, Veeravaram, Penikilapadu, China Ramanyya Peta, and Gubbalampalem.

They were seen catching fish using earthworms as a bait.

“I have been waiting for a dwelling under the R&R package, which is yet to be sanctioned due to an error in my father’s identity card,” Mr. Ramesh Reddi told *The Hindu*. At present, he lives in a rented house in a nearby habitation.

“While the fish could find a new habitat in the submerged Seetaram, it is uncertain when will I get my permanent home,” rues Mr. Ramesh Reddi.

14. Student-run NGO provides streetlights to remote Chenchu hamlet

Street Cause VJIT, a student-run NGO, has provided streetlights to a Chenchu village in Achampet mandal.

The group initiated ‘The Tribal Project’ after conducting a survey in Errapenta in Achampet (Nallamala project), which is home to the Chenchu tribe, and found that one of their major concerns was the absence of streetlights in their area. Living in the middle of dense forests, the villagers

are at the risk of being attacked by wild animals. Besides, the absence of lights causes hindrance to carry out daily activities.

Street Cause VJIT president P. Uday Kiran and team took up 'ROSHNI-Setting up solar lights in the tribal village' as part of which 20 streetlights and two solar lights were set up in the village. The solar lights work during power cut.

About:

Chenchus are a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group.

Distribution: They are forest dwellers whose hamlets or Pentas dot the Nallamala forest range spread across four to five districts in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh states.

Economy: Their traditional way of life has been based on hunting and gathering. They make leaf cups and leaf plates out of tobacco leaves, tamarind, mahua flowers and sell them in the local market. They also make use of the mahua flower in making the liquor.

Language: Chenchus talk in Chenchu language, **a member of the Dravidian language family.**

15. Tribal women have a significant role in India's transformation



As we stand at the threshold of India's 75th Independence day, it is a good time to reflect on how we can accelerate achieving its Sustainable Development Goals and transformation. While our country continues to make rapid progress on many fronts, with the lives of our marginalized populations also being touched, more needs to be done.

The tribal population in India, that constitutes 8.6% of India's total population (per the 2011 census), is amongst one of the most disadvantaged due to a host of factors, such as poverty, illiteracy, malnutrition, health problems, geographic isolation and lack of access to services.

Tribal women, comprising 47% of India's tribal population, are deeply connected to their communities and possess a profound understanding of their ecosystem. Time and again, they have established their ability to effect behavioural change on the ground and proven to be powerful community influencers. Studies have shown that tribal women, as culture keepers and archivists of ancient tribal practices and traditional

knowledge, also possess valuable insights on larger issues such as the climate crisis, forests, and sustainability.



The appointment of Droupadi Murmu, an outstanding Santhali woman from Mayurbanj, a tribal district of Odisha as the President of India, provides hope for millions of tribal women. It is also an opportunity to bring tribal health and nutrition issues to the centre of the national discourse. The trajectory of India's growth can be shifted significantly when tribal communities with tribal women are placed at the centre of solutions. With India entering its 'Amrit Kaal' (the 25 years leading up to the centennial of Independence), this will prove to be a game-changer.

There are several examples of individuals and groups of women from within tribal communities who have shown the way for inclusion and development. Young tribal women are helping lower maternal mortality rates in Araku valley, Andhra Pradesh, with no maternal deaths reported for three consecutive years prior to the pandemic. A young woman from the Wangcho tribe in a remote village in Arunachal Pradesh formed an informal group when there was no precedent of Self-Help Groups (SHGs), and mobilised local women to act collectively against the opium use prevalent amongst the youth in the community, thereby playing a key role in ensuring the overall well-being of her community.

The success of the recent Aashwasan 100-day campaign (which found over 9,000 new TB patients) by the ministry of tribal affairs, Central TB Division, (ministry of health and family welfare), USAID and Piramal Foundation to

raise awareness about Covid-19 vaccine and TB screening, testing and treatment initiation in 174 remote tribal districts can be attributed largely to women frontline workers and SHG members from tribal blocks who played an instrumental role in bringing community members together and persuading them to participate. Even when vehicles were not available, Epil (name changed), a tribal woman from West Singhbhum in Jharkhand, cycled between villages and the block headquarters crossing conflict-prone areas to ensure that sample collection and transportation for TB detection were not affected. For tribal women to be heard, and for their invaluable abilities to find wings, it is imperative for the equity lens to be donned.

Their voices need amplification on community platforms like Panchayati Raj Institutions and Jan Arogya Samiti. Frontline workers like Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA) and members of various women SHGs are already showing the way. Their stories need to find a much wider space in the mainstream narrative to ensure that they have an adequately high representation at all levels along with opportunities for their voices to emerge during multi-stakeholder dialogues on local development.

Additionally, providing them with learning systems would go a long way in building knowledge, capacities and leadership so that they can shine at the forefront. There is great truth in the adage

“When you empower a woman, you empower a generation and the nation”. As India progresses rapidly, the need of the hour is to ensure we develop the collective agency of tribal women to make Sabka Vikas (everyone’s development) a reality. It is indeed time for affirmative action and equitable progress. On this 75th Independence Day, let us turn our attention to this 8.6% of our people as we make strides towards great transformation. Let us re-affirm our commitment to leave no one behind.

16. Displaced from the hills: Livelihoods of tribal communities in Eastern Ghats under threat



Importance of biodiversity for communities dependant on agriculture has assumed greater significance with new farm laws, which may result in homogenisation of small farms

India's forest-dwelling communities have since antiquity utilised various biodiversity elements in forests to augment their livelihoods and fortify their nutritional security. Nowhere is this better exemplified than in the hilly region of the Eastern Ghats, spread along India's east coast in Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

It is home to several forest-dwelling tribal communities, including the Koyas, Konda Reddies, Kondhs, Savaras, Valmikis, Soligas and Parajas. The importance of biodiversity to agriculture dependent livelihoods has assumed greater significance with the new farm laws, which may result in the homogenisation of small farms through private participation, and consequently, the loss of biodiversity.

These tribal communities have distinct lifestyles, livelihoods and agricultural practices linked to forests, as well as varied experiences of changes that have occurred in the landscape.



Their livelihood and economy in this biodiverse, but largely neglected hill region, has been traditionally based on long fallows shifting cultivation of millets, pulses, and vegetables in fields spread over the hills (called *podu*), collection of local non-timber forest produce (NTFP) and hunting.

The north-eastern ghats of Andhra Pradesh are predominantly inhabited by tribal communities, mainly the Konda Reddies, Koyas and Nayakpods. They have historically been dependant on biodiversity of the landscape for food provisioning and supplementing their livelihoods.

A total of 35 unique forest products have been mentioned by communities in interviews conducted between 2014 and 2017, including 23 NTFP's that supplied food, medicine, fodder and provided significant cash income. A significant number of these forest-derived products are seasonal and therefore, play a prominent role in enhancing food security during the summer-off season, when agriculture and other sources of employment are not available.

For instance, ippa (*Madhuca indica*) flowers are widely collected and consumed, as well as used in curries. Additionally, mango and jackfruit,

honey, tubers, mushrooms are harvested and consumed fresh or processed and preserved.

Studies have found that tubers and fruits from the forest are rich in vitamins and anti-oxidants, and provide nutritional security. Communities depend on a variety of forest-based livelihoods and produce, including collection and sale of bamboo, wild fruits, firewood, gums and honey during summers.

Thereby, the forests provided communities with livelihood security, which was supported by the government-run Girijan Cooperative Corporation (GCC). It procured *Acacia sinuata* and *karakkaya* fruits, gum, honey, *Diospyros melanoxylon* leaves and *Phyllanthus emblica* fruits from them.

More recently, some individuals received forest titles to land under the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, and this as secured their land rights.

In recent decades, deforestation and landscape change from the construction of dams, intensified agriculture, timber plantations and mining for bauxite and other minerals in the Northern Eastern Ghats has negatively impacted communities. It has resulted in non-availability or decrease in availability of forest produce.

This has manifested in the lack of trees for building houses, unavailability of gum karaya *Sterculia urens*, kunkudukaaya *Sapindus emarginatus*, and honey as the larger gum and nut yielding and beehive preferred trees like *Adina cordifolia* and *Dalbergia sissoo* have been cut down.

They now need to travel greater distances to access bamboo and other forest produce. The death of toddy palm trees, because toddy tapping was no longer practiced, has also been observed by communities.

These landscape changes forced people to abandon traditional forest-based livelihoods opportunities and migrate to MGNREGS or employment in seasonal labour work.

Consequently, many villagers shifted to irrigated cultivation in the plains and along foothills to work as farm labourers or seasonal migrant workers in towns during summers. Primary occupations now are largely farming and manual farm / non-farm labour, work in the MGNREGS and in plantations and work in tourist boats.

Bamboo is extracted mechanically from long plantations for supply to paper pulp mills. This has led to a change in land cover. Collection of forest produce as well as cultivation of *podu* has reduced noticeably.

The GCC has halted the procurement of forest produce like gum, *beedi* leaves, honey from 2015; with this, the incentive to collect them has been lost.

Communities have been shift away from livelihoods dependent on forests into the plains and towards irrigated farming and urban settings, indigenous knowledge of forest resources. This has put are in danger of being lost.

The importance of forest biodiversity to livelihoods and food security of these communities has assumed significance in the light of the recently legislated farm laws that would allow for large private players to invest in agriculture and sale of agricultural produce outside of registered market boards (*mandis*).

They may facilitate contract farming and deregulate trade in several major food crops, and the longer-term consequences these would have for biodiversity. These legislations could have several direct and indirect implications on biodiversity in agricultural landscapes, and may result in the consolidation of smallholder farms into large private estates exacerbating loss of biodiversity.

17. Being Sarna: A fight to define tribal identity in Jharkhand



Tension among the tribal-dominated villages in Jharkhand for inclusion of the 'Sarna dharma code' in the religion column in the next census of 2021.

Details:

- Recently an agitation too pledges to intensify their struggle to get the government recognition to the '**Sarna dharma code**' and held a mass prayer at Jantar Mantar (New Delhi) seeking blessings of their deities and revered leaders.
- The members, the majority of whom belonged to the Santhal tribe, raised their demands under the aegis of the **Adivasi Sengel Abhiyan** (tribal empowerment campaign). It consists of more than 250 scheduled tribes-dominated blocks from 50 districts of Jharkhand, Bihar, Odisha, West Bengal, and Assam.
- They have been demanding recognition of it as a distinct religion for decades. At present, under the census, there are codes for only six religions: Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism, and Jainism. While filling in these columns, a **tribal resident has to identify himself or herself as one of these or as 'others'**, but cannot specify his / her religion as a different one.

Sarna religion

- The followers of Sarna are nature worshippers who believe in protecting the forest areas. The holy grail of the faith is “Jal, Jungle, Zameen”.
- They worship nature and do not practice idolatry.
- There is neither Varna system in their society or any sort of inequality.
- There practice follows natural laws and are not codified ones.

Threats to Sarnas:

- **Distortion of Identity:**
- The community members have highlighted the fear of subsuming their distinctive culture and identity under the umbrella of Hinduism and Christianity by “brainwashing” the poorest tribal people.
- **Indoctrination:** It is alleged that on the lines of Christian missionaries, now the Hindu groups have started converting poor tribal communities in malicious ways, which is challenging the very nature of what tribal people believe Sarnaism to be and how it should be practiced.
- It begins with the promise of elementary schools, pucca homes for villagers, and roads and electricity for the village.
- **The danger of Homogenization:** Hindus worship different gods and believe that they are the manifestation of nature, which tribal people worship. This endangers the belief of Sarna's existence as an indigenous faith.
- **Ideological encroachment:** The physical encroachment begins, starting with establishing Hindu temples at Sarna places of worship and culminating in the erasure of traditional tribal rituals and practices.
- Maheshpur village in district Gumla which is inhabited by Kharia people, a hunter-gatherer tribe who had been praying (**Sarna sthal**) at a two-acre patch of land has been reduced to a 200 sq ft plot of land. The majority of the plot has been taken over by a Hindu temple.

Need for separate code make:

- The protection of their language and history is an important aspect of tribals.

- Between 1871 and 1951, the tribals had a different code. However, it was changed around 1961-62.
- Experts say that when today the entire world is focusing on reducing pollution and protecting the environment, it is **prudent that Sarna becomes a religious code** as the soul of this religion is to protect nature and the environment.

Problems/Threats to the Tribal Community:

- Loss of cultural practices/ritual
- Impoverishment and unemployment
- No constitutional recognition for some tribes
- Land Alienation
- Poverty and Indebtedness
- Health and Nutrition
- Eviction in the name of conservation

Government efforts since independence:

- Since independence, the government has initiated several Five-Year Plans, programmes, policies, and laws and has made efforts for gradual socio-economic development of Scheduled Tribes, but they remain the weakest sections of the society.
- During these various Five-Year Plans, there has been a considerable increase in the fund allocation for the tribal areas. But most of the tribals were not able to draw benefits from the facilities provided by the government because of large-scale corruption among officials and improper implementation of tribal development schemes.
- The majority of the tribal people are not even aware of the development schemes implemented by government agencies. Without creating awareness among the tribal people, it is difficult to achieve better results.

Conclusion

These Adivasis are neither Hindus nor Christians. They have our way of life, religious practices, customs, culture, and religious thoughts, different from any other religion. The Sarna code movement is positioning itself as an answer to the question raised by the Supreme court: Who is Adivasi and what are the elements of tribal identity to be considered as Tribal.

It is high time the respective governments began duly acknowledging the critical role tribal people play in the conservation, preservation, and safeguarding of the richness of local biodiversity. The role of ecology/nature in building nationalism or regional pride through 'nature-based' symbols cannot be sidelined. The passing of the Sarna code is a form of 'eco-nationalism'.

18. Uplifting Tribal Communities in India through Digital Entrepreneurship

Inspired by the rich culture and talent represented by the tribal and indigenous communities of India, we are extending our collaboration with the Ministry of Tribal Affairs to launch the second phase of the Going Online As Leaders (GOAL) program. GOAL 2.0 will look to digitally upskill, connect and empower 10 lakh youth and women from the tribal communities of the country and will act as a bridge for the socially marginalized youth with a vast canvas of opportunities using technology that they otherwise may not have access to.

Through this program, the identified GOAL participants will have access to Meta Business Coach – a WhatsApp based learning bot – that will give the participants an opportunity to learn skills on how to build and grow their business using Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp. To empower the participants to play an active role in the digital economy, the program will also include Facebook Live sessions in nine languages by master trainers

on topics like Anti Scamming education, staying safe online, how to combat misinformation and being a good digital citizen.

Sh. Arjun Munda, Hon'ble Minister of Tribal Affairs launched the second phase of the GOAL program.

“India’s massive digital transformation can be complete when even the most vulnerable communities of our society are digitally empowered. We are deeply inspired by the stories of some of the Tribal leaders who benefitted from the first phase of GOAL that we kicked off in 2020. We recognize the wide canvas of opportunity that gets unlocked when these tribal communities have access to digital tools and technologies, and that is why we are excited to launch the next phase of this program. In collaboration with the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, GOAL 2.0 will upskill and empower 10 lakh women and youth across tribal communities to harness the full potential of digital platforms and tools.”

Tribal population constitutes about 8.6% of the total population in India. Digitally empowering India’s tribal communities could contribute significantly to the socioeconomic development of the country and an important step towards creating a flourishing community of tribal leaders. The first phase of GOAL included inspiring, connecting and upskilling tribal youth from across the country. As a result of GOAL, 75% of the participants from the tribal community admitted to being able to better articulate their thoughts to words and saw an improvement in their interpersonal skills. About 69% were able to leverage digital commerce for increased reach and about 63% said that it helped them understand how to set up their business.

The program is aimed at empowering youth and women from tribal and indigenous communities to harness the full potential of digital platforms and enhancing their leadership skills for driving community development. Along with digital inclusion, the program aims to actively contribute to the economy by continuing to support the most vulnerable communities in tribal districts with a focus on tribal youth and on businesses led by tribal women in rural areas.