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PAPER -1

PHYSICAL & ARCHAEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

1. Genes Don't Lie: DNA Reveals a New Twist in Human Origin Story



Contemporary DNA evidence suggests that humans emerged from the interaction of multiple populations living across the continent.

A new study in *Nature* challenges prevailing theories, suggesting that *Homo sapiens* evolved from multiple diverse populations across Africa, with the earliest detectable split occurring 120,000-135,000 years ago, after prolonged periods of genetic intermixing.

There is broad agreement that *Homo sapiens* originated in Africa. But there remain many uncertainties and competing theories about where, when, and how.

In a paper published on May 17, 2023, in *Nature*, an international research team led by McGill University and the University of California-Davis suggest that, based on contemporary genomic evidence from across the continent, there were humans living in different regions of Africa, migrating from one region to another and mixing with one another over a period of hundreds of thousands of years. This view runs counter to some of the dominant theories about human origins in Africa.

Competing theories about human origins in Africa

One theory holds that, about 150,000 years ago, there was a single central ancestral population in Africa from which other populations diverged. Another suggests that this central ancestral population was the result of the mixing of modern humans with a Neanderthal-like hominins (human-like beings), resulting in a leap forward in human evolution, as has been suggested took place in Eurasia.

“At different times, people who embraced the classic model of a single origin for *Homo sapiens* suggested that humans first emerged in either East or Southern Africa,” says Brenna Henn, a population geneticist in the Department of Anthropology and in the Genome Center at the University of California, Davis and co-lead author of the research. “But it has been difficult to reconcile these theories with the limited fossil and archaeological records of human occupation from sites as far afield as Morocco, Ethiopia, and South Africa which show that *Homo sapiens* were to be found living across the continent as far back as at least 300,000 years ago.”

So, the research team took a different approach.

Contemporary genomic evidence tells a different story

In the first systematic test of these competing anthropological models against genetic data, the team worked backward from contemporary genomic material of 290 individuals from four geographically and genetically diverse African groups to trace the similarities and differences between the populations over the past million years and gain insight into the genetic interconnections and human evolution across the continent.

The groups were the Nama (Khoe-San from South Africa); the Mende (from Sierra Leone); the Gumuz (recent descendants of a hunter-gatherer group from Ethiopia); and the Amhara and Oromo (agriculturalists from eastern Africa). The researchers also included some Eurasian genetic material to include the traces of colonial incursions and mixing in Africa.

“We used a new algorithm to rapidly test hundreds of possible scenarios. Those with gene flow back and forth between populations in various parts of the continent over the course of hundreds of thousands of years provided a much better explanation of the genetic variation we see today,” adds Simon Gravel, Associate Professor in the Department of Human Genetics at McGill University, and co-senior author on the paper. “We wrote this algorithm to understand how genetic disease risk varies across populations, and it led us to this deep dive into human origins. It’s been really fun to tie applied and fundamental research together in this way.”

2. Co-Existence of Modern Humans and Neanderthals in France and Northern Spain



New research reveals that modern humans and Neanderthals co-existed in France and northern Spain for 1,400 to 2,900 years, as determined through advanced radiocarbon-dating and statistical modeling of archaeological artifacts. The study sheds new light on human evolution but does not indicate how the two species might have interacted.

For between 1,400 and 2,900 years before Neanderthals disappeared, modern humans may have co-existed with Neanderthals in France and northern Spain. This is according to a new modeling study that was published on October 13 in the journal *Scientific Reports*. These findings increase our understanding of the existence of the two species of humans in this region.

Modern humans (*Homo Sapiens*) and Neanderthals (*Homo neanderthalensis*) may have co-existed in Europe for as long as 5,000 to 6,000 years before Neanderthals became extinct, according to recently uncovered fossil evidence. However, there is currently little evidence for their co-existence at a regional level. Moreover, it is difficult to establish when the two species first appeared and disappeared in these areas.

In the new study, Igor Djakovic and colleagues analyzed a dataset of 56 Neanderthal and modern human artifacts (28 for each group) from seventeen archaeological sites across France and northern Spain, as well as an additional ten Neanderthal specimens from the same region. For greater accuracy, all samples had been radiocarbon-dated using robust modern techniques since 2000.

The authors used Optimal Linear Estimation and Bayesian probability modeling to estimate the date ranges for these samples and the populations responsible, and infer the earliest and latest dates that these human groups might have been present at the sites. This modeling served to fill in missing portions of the archaeological record, which hamper date estimation.

Based on this modeling, the authors estimate that Neanderthal artifacts first appeared between 45,343 and 44,248 years ago, and disappeared between 39,894 and 39,798 years ago. The date of Neanderthal extinction, based on directly-dated Neanderthal remains, was between 40,870 and 40,457 years ago. Modern humans were estimated to first appear between 42,653 and 42,269 years ago. The authors conclude that this suggests the two species of humans co-existed in these regions for between 1,400 and 2,900 years. These results do not, however, indicate how or whether

modern humans and Neanderthals interacted.

3. Clear Evidence Links Astronomically-Driven Climate Change and Human Evolution



Preferred habitats of *Homo sapiens* (purple shading, left), *Homo heidelbergensis* (red shading, middle), *Homo neanderthalensis* (blue shading, right) calculated from a new paleoclimate model simulation conducted at the IBS Center for Climate Physics and a compilation of fossil and archeological data. Lighter values indicate higher habitat suitability. The dates (1 ka = 1000 years before present) refer to the estimated ages of the youngest and oldest fossils used in the study. Credit: Institute for Basic Science

Early Human Habitats Linked to Past Climate Shifts

A study published in *Nature* by an international team of scientists provides clear evidence for a link between astronomically-driven climate change and human evolution.

By combining the most extensive database of well-dated fossil remains and archeological artifacts with an unprecedented new supercomputer model simulating earth's climate history of the past 2 million years, the team of experts in climate modeling, anthropology, and ecology was able to determine under which environmental conditions archaic humans likely lived (Figure 1).

The impact of climate change on human evolution has long been suspected, but has been difficult to demonstrate due to the paucity of climate records near human fossil-bearing sites. To bypass this problem, the team instead investigated what the climate in their computer simulation was like at the times and places humans lived, according to the archeological record. This revealed the preferred environmental conditions of different groups of hominins.^[1] From there, the team looked for all the places and times those conditions occurred in the model, creating time-evolving maps of potential hominin habitats.

“Even though different groups of archaic humans preferred different climatic environments, their habitats all responded to climate shifts caused by astronomical changes in earth's axis wobble, tilt, and orbital eccentricity with timescales ranging from 21 to 400 thousand years,” said Axel Timmermann, lead author of the study and Director of the IBS Center for Climate Physics (ICCP) at Pusan National University in South Korea.

To test the robustness of the link between climate and human habitats, the scientists repeated their analysis, but with ages of the fossils shuffled like a deck of cards. If the past evolution of climatic variables did not impact where and when humans lived, then both methods would result in the same habitats. However, the researchers found significant differences in the habitat patterns for the three most recent hominin groups (*Homo sapiens*,

Homo neanderthalensis and *Homo heidelbergensis*) when using the shuffled and the realistic fossil ages. “This result implies that at least during the past 500 thousand years the real sequence of past climate change, including glacial cycles, played a central role in determining where different hominin groups lived and where their remains have been found,” said Prof. Timmermann.

“The next question we set out to address was whether the habitats of the different human species overlapped in space and time. Past contact zones provide crucial information on potential species successions and admixture,” said Prof. Pasquale Raia from the Università di Napoli Federico II, Naples, Italy, who together with his research team compiled the dataset of human fossils and archeological artifacts used in this study. From the contact zone analysis, the researchers then derived a hominin family tree, according to which Neanderthals and likely Denisovans derived from the Eurasian clade of *Homo heidelbergensis* around 500-400 thousand years ago, whereas *Homo sapiens*’ roots can be traced back to Southern African populations of late *Homo heidelbergensis* around 300 thousand years ago.

“Our climate-based reconstruction of hominin lineages is quite similar to recent estimates obtained from either genetic data or the analysis of morphological differences in human fossils, which increases our confidence in the results,” remarks Dr. Jiaoyang Ruan, co-author of the study and postdoctoral research fellow at the IBS Center for Climate Physics.

The new study was made possible by using one of South Korea’s fastest supercomputers named Aleph. Located at the headquarters of the Institute for Basic Science in Daejeon, Aleph ran non-stop for over 6 months to complete the longest comprehensive climate model simulation to date. “The model

generated 500 Terabytes of data, enough to fill up several hundred hard disks,” said Dr. Kyung-Sook Yun, a researcher at the IBS Center for Climate Physics who conducted the experiments. “It is the first continuous simulation with a state-of-the-art climate model that covers earth’s environmental history of the last 2 million years, representing climate responses to the waxing and waning of ice-sheets, changes in past greenhouse gas concentrations, as well as the marked transition in the frequency of glacial cycles around 1 million years ago,” adds Dr. Yun.

“So far, the paleoanthropological community has not utilized the full potential of such continuous paleoclimate model simulations. Our study clearly illustrates the value of well-validated climate models to address fundamental questions on our human origins,” says Prof. Christoph Zollikofer from the University of Zurich, Switzerland and co-author of the study.

Going beyond the question of early human habitats, and times and places of human species’ origins, the research team further addressed how humans may have adapted to varying food resources over the past 2 million years. “When we looked at the data for the five major hominin groups, we discovered an interesting pattern. Early African hominins around 2-1 million years ago preferred stable climatic conditions. This constrained them to relatively narrow habitable corridors. Following a major climatic transition about 800 thousand year ago, a group known under the umbrella term *Homo heidelbergensis* adapted to a much wider range of available food resources, which enabled them to become global wanderers, reaching remote regions in Europe and eastern Asia,” said Elke Zeller, PhD student at Pusan National University and co-author of the study.

“Our study documents that climate played a fundamental role in the evolution of our genus *Homo*. We are who we are because we have managed to adapt over millennia to slow shifts in the past climate,” says Prof. Axel Timmermann.

4. Major new research claims smaller-brained *Homo naledi* made rock art and buried the dead

As per the recent discovery, *Homo naledi* had a brain one-third the size of humans but displayed intelligence far beyond.



Homo naledi

4.2 - 3.8 million years ago

Australopithecus anamensis:
Has a combination of traits found in both apes and humans, including the upper end of the shin bone, and a human-like ankle joint, which indicates regular upright walking. Discovered in 1965 in northern Kenya.

335 - 236 thousand years ago

Homo naledi:
An extinct species of archaic human discovered in 2013 in the Rising Star Cave, Cradle of Humankind, South Africa, dating to the Middle Pleistocene period. Its teeth differ from other Homo species that lived around the same time.

300 - 28 thousand years ago

Homo neandertalensis:
Commonly known as neanderthals, they are known to be the closest relatives to humans. They were shorter and stockier than Homo sapiens and had distinct features in their skulls, including a large middle part of the face, angled cheek bones and a huge nose used for humidifying and warmer cold, dry air.

200 thousand years ago to present

Homo sapiens:
Modern human beings evolved in Africa during a dramatic climate change about 300,000 years ago. Modern humans are characterized by the lighter build of their skeletons compared to earlier humans and large brains.

PHOTO CREDIT: GETTY IMAGES
SOURCE: SMITHSONIAN NATIONAL MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

abc NEWS

- **Homo naledi** is an **extinct species of archaic human** discovered in 2013 in the Rising Star Cave, Cradle of Humankind, South Africa.
- The discovery can be dated to the **Middle Pleistocene 335,000–236,000 years ago**.
- **Homo naledi** had **human-like hands** and feet but a **brain a third of the size of humans**.

Key Highlights of the Study:

Did Homo naledi bury their dead?

- The earliest secure evidence for burial in Africa comes from the **Panga ya Saidi cave site** in **eastern Kenya**, excavated by our team and dated to **78,000 years ago**.
 - This burial of a **Homo sapiens child** meets rigorous criteria agreed upon by the scientific community for identifying **intentional human burial**.
- Homo naledi burials precede the **Panga ya Saidi burial evidence** by as much as **160,000 years**.
- It significantly pushes back evidence for **advanced mortuary behaviour in Africa**.
- It also implies **intentional burial wasn't limited to our species** or other big-brained hominins.
- But there is no evidence of funerary behaviour at **Rising Star Cave**, as per the standards set by the **palaeoanthropology community**.

Did Homo Naledi make rock art?

- The report describes engravings in the form of deeply impressed **cross-hatchings and geometric shapes** such as **squares, triangles, crosses and X's**.
- Claims are made about the preparation of and potential repeated **handling or rubbing of the associated rock surface** and the use of a similar "tool" to the one they claim was found with the alleged burial.
- Rock art has only reliably been **linked to Homo sapiens** and, in rarer cases, some of our large-brained ancestors.
- The rock art at Rising Star Cave is that it's **undated**. To imply any link with Homo naledi requires firm dates.

- It is **spurious to claim the engravings were made by Homo naledi** in the absence of dating, rather than by another species (and potentially at a much later date).

Did Homo Naledi light up Rising Star Cave?

- The report also claims the **mortuary and engraving activities** in Rising Star Cave involved the strategic use of **fire for illumination**.
- The researchers have found **new evidence for hearths, including charcoal, ash, discoloured clay and burned animal bones**.
- Yet none of the scientific research needed to confirm the **use of fire has been carried out**.

SOCIO – CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

1. A Deadly Craft: Unraveling the Dangerous Reality of Flintknapping for Early Humans



Everywhere around the globe, hundreds of stone artifacts enthusiasts dedicate their time to striking stones with specialized tools, striving to fashion flawless arrowheads or knives. This endeavor, known as flintknapping, is seen by many as an intricate pastime or artistic pursuit, which was assumed to sporadically necessitate bandages or stitches.

Yet, recent studies propose that flintknapping presents greater hazards than initially comprehended. For our early ancestors, who lacked contemporary advantages such as hospitals,

antibiotics, clean water, and band-aids, even a moderately serious wound could become infected, posing a potential threat to life.

“Knapping injuries were a risk past peoples were willing to take,” said Metin I. Eren, Ph.D., associate professor and director of archaeology at Kent State University.

Eren and his colleague Stephen Lycett, Ph.D., associate professor of anthropology at the University at Buffalo, both also flintknappers themselves, were curious about knapping injuries and risks. More than 10 years ago, they began discussing a study they wanted to conduct that involved surveying modern flintknappers and documenting their injuries systematically.

“We’ve known for a long while that flintknapping can result in injuries, but its never been quantitatively assessed on a widespread level,” Eren said. “What is the frequency of injury? How bad can flintknapping injuries get? For that sort of thing, you need a large sample size.”

They found Nicholas Gala, at the time a Kent State undergraduate anthropology major working in Kent State’s Experimental Archaeology Lab, who was looking for a senior honors thesis project.

Gala conducted the survey that led to his first authored article in North America’s flagship archaeology research journal, *American Antiquity*. They received survey responses from 173 modern flintknappers who described their wide-ranging injuries. The article, “The Injury Costs of Knapping,” was also co-authored by Eren, Lycett and Michelle Bebber, Ph.D., assistant professor in the Department of Anthropology at Kent State.

“Nick’s work on this project has been fantastic,” Lycett said. “Successfully coordinating a number of different project elements always requires considerable skill and organization. The number of parts in this project, from coming up with a questionnaire to reaching out to many flintknappers and then collating and thinking about all the data, was a difficult task.”

Gala earned his Bachelor of Science in Anthropology at Kent State in 2022 and is now pursuing a master’s degree at the University of Tulsa, where he received two fellowships and is currently studying lithic technology.

Flintknapping and Injuries

Flintknapping is the method of breaking, flaking, and shaping stone tools, such as points for arrow tips or sharp blades for an axe or knife. Archaeological evidence for knapping goes back more than 3 million years.

“People like to say, ‘You are going to cut yourself while learning to flint knap, even if you are an expert flintknapper,’ so we wanted to know how dangerous it actually is,” Gala said. “What are the most severe injuries that people have? How can we relate that to past people?”

The researchers learned that knapping is far more dangerous than they previously imagined. Among some of the most severe injuries reported by flintknappers included running a flake across their bone like a wood planar, cutting deep into the periosteum of the bone, and the need for a tourniquet after piercing their ankle with a flake. Thirty-five people surveyed said they have had small stone flakes fly into one of their eyes. The researchers also shared a historical account of William Henry Holmes who disabled his entire left arm from flintknapping back in the late

1890s. Several grislier examples are reported in the open-access study.

“This study emphasizes how important stone tools would have been to past peoples,” Eren said. “They literally would have risked life and limb to make stone tools during a period without band-aids, antibiotics, or hospitals. But despite those injury costs, past peoples made stone tools anyway – the benefits provided must have been immense.”

“What, to us, might seem a minor inconvenience, could in the past have proven fatal if the wound became infected and prevented an individual from effectively gathering food, water and undertaking other essential activities,” Lycett said. “For those taking care of small infants, not only would their life be in jeopardy, but the life of these infants would also be in the balance. The costs of injury in the ancient world were magnified. These are exactly the kinds of costs that evolutionary models will need to take account of, and our study is a step toward that.”

Bebber collaborated with Gala on how to best visualize and report his data and developed a color-coded figure, which illustrates that injuries are not just limited to the hands. Injury frequency varies, and there are injuries that occur on the entire body, including flintknappers’ feet, legs, and torso.

“The eye injuries are the most dangerous from my perspective, simply because they seem to be common and could result in loss of sight, which would significantly impact the life of the knapper,” Bebber said. “Stone tools were vital to their daily activities and overall survival. I think overall they were used to a more dangerous lifestyle and also would have had their own ways of treating injuries.”

Social Learning

The researchers were also interested in more accurately considering how injury risks might be incorporated into ongoing debates about the likelihood of ancient species (*Homo erectus*, *Homo habilis*) engaging in social learning (to teach and prevent injuries) when learning to make stone tools.

“Social learning involves directly copying the outcomes or actions of a more skilled individual rather than learning everything by yourself through trial and error,” Lycett said. “We know from studies of animals and humans that social learning, rather than learning individually, is more likely when there is an increased risk or cost to learning alone. The injury risks involved in knapping are exactly the kind of activity that would have made learning from a skilled individual more likely since it would help reduce the risks associated with individual learning.

“Stone tools are the best evidence we have to track social learning early in our evolution because they withstand the passage of time,” Lycett continued. “Other skills may have been socially learned deep in prehistory, but evidence for those behaviors is not so well preserved.”

2. How has India's caste system lasted for so many centuries?



Caste system continues even after losing its *raison d'être*, but the scramble for development has destroyed the ancient sustainable and shared patterns of resource-use it had taught for centuries

Madhav Gadgil, an ecologist, and anthropologist Kailash Malhotra trace the history of India's caste system that had enforced discipline in the use of natural resources and played a crucial role in preserving India's natural riches. Their 12-year study documents how the pastoral and nomadic castes developed traditions of prudence in the use of resources and how resource depletion and environment degradation marginalised several communities.

At a time when social tensions are on the rise with people fighting over scarce natural resources, it is important to remember how the caste system taught 'genuine cultural adjustment' and sustainable and shared patterns of resource-use over centuries.

Caste and Environment

The question has troubled sociologists for years. How has India's caste system, so elaborate – an estimated 40,000 castes – rigid, hereditarily determined, hierarchical and oppressive a social structure lasted for so many centuries? Madhav Gadgil, an ecologist, and anthropologist Kailash Malhotra feel that the answer probably lies in the discipline that the caste system brought to the use of natural resources. It was a system which, on the one hand, forced its members to share natural resources and on the other created the right social milieu in which sustainable patterns of resource use were encouraged to emerge. In other words, it was a social system which both forced and cajoled the social being right from birth to adopt sustainable cultural mores.

Within the caste system, birth determined a human being's occupation. An 'ecological space' and its natural resources could only be used by a definite occupational group. This 'resource partitioning' helped to reduce competition and, hence, conflict among human beings over scarce natural resources, and to create the right psychological environment: the allottees of an ecological space developed sustainable patterns because they had no worry that their resources would be snatched away from them and probably also because they knew that if they exhausted the resources in their own space, they would not be allowed to use any other.

Malhotra and Gadgil are quick to point out that even though the caste system lasts till today, it has stopped 'resource partitioning'. The growing monetisation of the Indian economy, first encouraged by the invading British, then by independent India in the name of development, has destroyed the ancient sustainable and shared patterns of resource-use evolved over centuries. Social tensions are increasing as people fight over scarce natural resources, and because the caste system continues even after losing its *raison d'être*, it has become a source of social power and oppression.

These conclusions emerge from a 12-year study of rural society in western Maharashtra. Here, the Western Ghats rise abruptly some 50 km inland from the Arabian Sea to an altitude of 1,000 m to 1,500 m. Their 15 km to 20 km-wide crest line is marked by heavy rainfall, more than 3,000 mm a year, and it supports low but stable agricultural and pastoral productivity. The simple society here, mostly marked by single clan settlements, consists of a few sedentary castes of cultivators, pastoralists and hunter-gatherers, which include Gavils who are mainly cultivators, and Kunbis who are buffalo herders and shifting cultivators.

Further eastward, the Western Ghats merge with the Deccan plateau through a series of broken hills, and the rainfall in this tract falls to about 1,500 mm to 1,000 mm near the edge of the plateau. This tract supports rich agriculture and harbours a complex rural society with a number of artisans and service castes. Still further east, the rainfall decreases further to less than 600 mm in a semi-arid tract of 100 km to 150 km width.

Agriculture, here, is practised only in the river valleys.

Pastoralists and hunter-gatherers use large tracts of uncultivated land. Because the terrain favours sedentary existence during the four monsoon months, and uncultivated lands are available for

grazing, several pastoral as well as non-pastoral nomadic castes have established their base villages in this semi-arid tract. They migrate to the higher rainfall tracts, both to the east and west of the semi-arid tract, for the eight dry months of the year. Among those who have their base villages in this tract are Hatkars, Tirumal Nandiwallas, Fulmali Nandiwallas, Vaidus and Phasepardhis.

Niche diversification

The first example of 'ecological niche diversification' is exhibited by the Kunbis and Gavli Dhangars living on the crest line of the Western Ghats. The Kunbis cultivate paddy in the river valleys, practise shifting cultivation on the lower hill slopes and hunt extensively. They barter their cereals for butter – produced by the Gavlis – and other goods. The only cattle they keep are for draught purposes.

The Gavlis, on the other hand, live on the upper hill terraces: although they practise some shifting cultivation, their main occupation is keeping buffaloes and cattle. They curdle the milk, consume the buttermilk locally and barter the butter for cereals from the Kunbis. As they get their protein supply from buttermilk, they do not need to hunt. Thus, the cultivation of valleys and lower hill slopes is restricted to the Kunbis and of hill terraces to the Gavlis. Maintenance of domesticated animals and exploitation of all fodder and grazing is restricted to the Gavlis and the hunting of wild animals to the Kunbis.

Another instance of niche diversification is provided by the three nomadic hunting communities of the semi-arid tracts of western Maharashtra: Tirumal Nandiwallas, Phasepardhis and Vaidus. The primary occupation of the Nandiwallas is entertainment and

fortune telling, that of the Vaidus dispensation of herbal medicines, while the Phasepardhis are specialist hunter-gatherers. Unlike the settled castes, the Tirumal Nandiwallas and Vaidus also hunt in addition to their primary occupations. But the three castes use distinctly different hunting techniques and specialise in different prey species.

The Tirumal Nandiwallas use dogs to hunt wild pigs, large carnivorous mammals (leopard cat, hyena and fox) and aquatic animals (fish, crab, turtle). Vaidus use baited traps for smaller carnivores (mongoose, civet, jackal and cat), monitor lizards and aquatic animals. The Phasepardhis specialise in blackbuck, wild pig and birds such as doves, quails, partridges and peafowl.

Wild meat means a lot to these castes. Gadgil and Malhotra studied the Tirumal Nandiwallas in greater detail and found that the medium annual biomass of hunted animal is 2,180 kg per family of Tirumal Nandiwallas, who are thorough in their use of the hunted animals. They even eat portions like the brain and the viscera, normally rejected by other people. Almost two-thirds of the live weight of the prey is consumed. In terms of per capita daily consumption, the median works out to 57 gm of protein and 850 calories from hunted wild meat. For the Tirumal Nandiwallas, the hunted meat provides a more than adequate level of protein and over one-third of the calorific requirements of an average person.

What is striking is that while the hunting techniques used by the three groups are significantly different, none of them are so sophisticated that they cannot be adopted by another caste. For example, the Phasepardhis could have easily added the Vaidus' baited traps to their own shares. But they don't, which points to a genuine cultural adjustment.

This division of labour has two important consequences. First, the pressure of exploitation is evenly dispersed over the exploited plant and animal populations. Second, each group is aware that resources in its hereditary territory have sustained it for generations, and will sustain its descendants for generations to come.

Territoriality

The question of territoriality becomes ecologically significant in the case of pastoral nomads. A study of the shepherd caste of Hatkars, who number 500,000 and are distributed over 19 districts of Maharashtra in the drier tracts reveals a remarkable pattern. Although a large percentage have now taken to settled cultivation, about 18 per cent still have nomadic sheep-keeping as their sole occupation.

The shepherds spend the rainy season in their base villages and fan out from there to graze their flocks for the dry period. Shepherds from one village operate in a specified territory which does not overlap with that of other villages. The composite territory of a small group of shepherd families is hereditarily determined and may be encroached upon only with special permission in times of serious distress by other shepherd families: even intra-caste competition is reduced.

For instance, village Dhawalpuri of Ahmednagar district comprises four different settlements within a kilometre of each other. While setting out on their migration after the rains, each settlement leaves as a single band moving in a traditionally predetermined direction. As the band moves it continues to split along kinship lines into progressively smaller groups, each

moving in its own direction, till the group of families constituting the ultimate unit of the flock reaches its own territory.

This intra-caste territoriality also applies to non-pastoral nomads of the region. Both Tirumal Nandiwallas and Fulmali Nandiwallas make a living by parading the sacred bull, selling trinkets and hunting. Their areas do not overlap. The base village of Tirumal Nandiwallas is Wadapuri in Pune district, while the 32 base villages of Fulmali Nandiwallas are distributed over the districts of Ahmednagar, Bhir, Aurangabad and Nasik. Both castes spend the monsoon months in their base villages and spread out during the dry season.

Every Tirumal Nandiwalla family had, and even today has exclusive rights to visit certain villages. This right is respected by all other families of their caste, and heavy punishment is levied by the caste council for any transgression. The rights are hereditary and may be sold, but only to another family of the same clan within the caste. The Nandiwallas have a similar, if less well-defined system.

Over the years, these pastoral and nomadic castes have developed traditions of prudence in the use of resources. For instance, the Pharsepardhis do not kill a pregnant doe or a fawn caught in their snares, which is considered an investment for a future generation. Another example comes from the upper Yamuna valley near Nainital where villagers poison the river upstream with herb-derived poison which kills fish.

This is done just once a year at the time of a communal festival when this fish is fed to the entire community. At other times of the year fish can only be caught with nets; anybody caught

poisoning the river is excommunicated. Similarly, a number of groups traditionally consider entire groves and ponds sacred: no plant or animal life in these is allowed to be touched. Some species of plants and animals have survived till today because of such traditions.

Impact of modernisation

The traditional rulers of India made minimal demands on wild plants and animals, mainly because they got what they needed from collecting the agricultural surplus from rural areas as tax. Only items of special value like cardamom, sandalwood, musk and ivory came from the wild. An edict of the Maratha king Shivaji dated around 1660 AD forbids the cutting of fruit-bearing trees such as mango and jackfruit for use in building ships for his navy, on the grounds that this would result in considerable suffering for the peasantry in his kingdom. Under such rulers, the basic unity of the system survived.

With the advent of British rule, however, greater demands were made on the natural resources of the country – for raw materials for their industrial economy. To avoid having to pay for these resources, vast areas of communal land were declared government property. These resources were rapidly depleted through commercial exploitation, a trend that has accelerated since independence and has led to considerable impoverishment and often a complete collapse of the natural resource base.

The cash economy, which is replacing the traditional barter trade, is destroying traditional relationships between various castes and increasing competition and tension amongst them for limited natural resources. Population growth in the Western Ghats has also been an important factor in increasing the pressure on land,

especially after the 1920s with the control of epidemic diseases such as influenza and plague.

The consequent deforestation and soil erosion in recent years have destroyed the fodder base of Gavli animals. The Gavlis, have been forced to reduce their animal holdings and take increasingly to cultivating more land on hill slopes. This has prompted them to try and purchase land from peasants and become more sedentary. In the process, they have also changed their lifestyle. While earlier their houses were made of bamboo and thatch, compatible with frequent shifts, now they build more durable large timber beams and poles, metal or tile roofing.

In earlier times, the Gavlis mostly kept buffaloes because there was an adequate fodder base and shade provided by thick forests. In recent decades they have turned to keeping cattle and now, goats. Goat-keeping is phenomenon of the last two decades, indicating the accelerating rate of deterioration of tree growth and fodder base. The forest is being cut for a variety of commercial purposes, including charcoal for urban areas. Even the trees that were traditionally conserved by the Gavlis in the tracts where they practised shifting cultivation have now been cut.

The resulting degradation of the environment cannot support animal husbandry as practised traditionally by the Gavlis. These people curdled and converted the milk from their cattle to butter mainly because they lived away from villages and did not have the means to transport and sell milk to the settled population further afield. They could get grain by bartering their butter. Today, however, the Gavlis market their milk through cooperative societies set up to supply milk to urban areas. The thrust of the dairy development schemes is to tap milk from rural areas and deliver it to urban areas. The infrastructure of truck

routes, chilling plants and power plants is geared to this end; no consideration has been given to improving the fodder base, health or genetic quality of the milk-producing animals.

Furthermore, the Gavlis have started to market all their milk, denying themselves the protein in their diet provided by buttermilk. The 150 per cent increase in their cash income is not being used to supplement their diet. Instead, it is being used to meet entirely new wants of expensive clothing, housing and so on that have arisen from being part of the market economy and from contact with urban culture.

To meet their nutritional needs, the Gavlis are cultivating more land, even steep slopes that were kept for fodder. While marketing the milk, the calves are not allowed to suckle as before, thereby stunting their growth, delaying the age of reproduction and worsening the fodder-to-milk conversion ratio. The changeover to goat-keeping is also accelerating the degradation of the vegetation.

Many Kunbis, too, have lost their fertile paddy fields to river valley projects and have been pushed up the hills. Their prey has also dwindled with deforestation. Where they used to get a deer or wild pig every week, they now barely get a black-naped hare once a month. The urban milk schemes have lured Kunbis into keeping milch animals and, therefore, they are no longer willing to let Gavli animals graze in their fields after harvest as they did before. All of this has led to serious conflicts between Kunbis and Gavlis, often forcing the numerically weaker Gavlis to abandon their traditional occupation and locality.

The Gavlis have experienced a drastic shrinkage of available territory. At first they began to intensify the shifting cultivation of

the hill plateaus and upper hill slopes. Because they had traditionally not established ownership rights over land, this meant encroachment on government-owned forest land and conflict with government officials. When this option had run its course, the Gavlis began to move out of the area. With the control of malaria in the still forested areas of the Western Ghats of Karnataka, an estimated 15,000 Gavlis moved there between 1945 and 1960. Many others began to accept other non-traditional occupations in nearby areas, such as gardening, tailoring and bicycle repairing, especially near the hill resort of Mahabaleshwar in Satara district. Finally, an estimated 8,000 Gavlis migrated to cities like Bombay and began work as unskilled workers, visiting their families once or twice a year. Several hundreds have joined the army.

Another example of a group marginalised by the degraded environment is the Phasepardhis. This hunting-gathering tribe generally stayed aloof from settled villages; sometimes farmers asked them to snare a black buck, deer or any other animal raiding their fields. In recent decades the main prey of the Phasepardhis have either been decimated, or hunting them has been declared illegal as in the case of the black buck. The Phasepardhis have taken increasingly to theft, prostitution and begging, and now live in a tense relationship with the settled community.

The Vaidus, too, have witnessed major changes because of modernisation. Over half of them have given up their traditional occupations, moving to cities like Bombay, Pune and Kolhapur to work as wage labourers, or to take up petty manufacture, mend tin boxes, sell trinkets, and catch and sell snakes. The major reason for their social decline has been the primary healthcare centres and the spread of allopathic medicines, resulting in a drop

in demand for Vaidu medicine. Those that continue to practise their traditional occupation have started keeping some allopathic medicines, and are labelled by modern doctors as quacks.

PAPER - 2

INDIAN & TRIBAL ANTHROPOLOGY

1. All-India Tribal Convention calls for new tribal policy



The All-India Tribal Convention called for a new Tribal Policy to ensure the development of tribal languages, cultures and the setting up of a tribal history academy

Inaugurated by Vasavi Kiro, renowned author and activist from Jharkhand, the convention highlighted tribal medicine, cuisines and other knowledge, including the chanting of "*Sonot jooaar*" (long live nature); "*Ootey abuwaa*" (this land is ours), "*Bir abuwaa*"

(the forests are ours) and "Disum aabuwa Desh" (country is ours) and "Jai Joohar".

Kiro said there were more than 700 million indigenous people in the world, of which 200 million reside in India. Their 7,000 indigenous cultures have been ignored and repressed even 75 years after colonial rule. India has more than 750 ethnic tribes of which 75 are most vulnerable. Their social, cultural, economic and political situation is very grave.

The convention raised all issues relating to attacks on tribal communities – lands being taken away, livelihood being snatched, concerted attacks on identity, culture and languages, ignoring of anti-colonial tribal heroes and despicable attempts to sow discord and conflict among them.

“Adivasis in India suffer because of state policy which is based on ‘development induced displacement’, loot of forests and natural wealth, land alienation, degradation of nature, failure to recognise their indigenous religions like Sarna and attempts to forcefully assimilate them into Hindu religion, failure to implement their Constitutional and legal rights,” said Kiro. She said of the 10 crore people uprooted in India, 80 per cent are Adivasis and Indigenous people

Former Union secretary EAS Sarma said that the government is bulldozing Adivasis and attacking their rights. “This government is so anti people that it does not consult even the National ST Commission,” said Sarma. Even though there were the Constitutional securities in place for Adivasis, senior advocate and writer Pala Trinadh Ra said the government is allegedly undermining them to favour corporations and MNCs.

The convention passed four resolutions: Condemning repression

of tribals in Burhanpur in Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and other parts of India; demanding the arrest of BJP MP Brij Bhushan Singh, condemning alleged RSS-sponsored violence in Manipur and the gangrape of a tribal woman by paramilitary forces at Vakapalli in Andhra Pradesh.

2. Nilgiri tribes oppose ST status for Badagas, question their unique identity status



The Nilgiris harbour the indigenous tribes of Toda, Kota, Kurumba, Kattunayakan, Paniya and Irula along with Badagas and repatriates from Sri Lanka. Of these, the Badagas are the most prosperous community.

During a recent visit to the Nilgiris area, Tamil Nadu Forest Minister Ramachandran announced at a public gathering that his community, the Badagas, would not be listed under Schedule Tribe (ST) as they were an economically and socially empowered community. His statement led to a furore among the Badagas, but

also led to questions about their indigeneity, origins and their adaptability among their neighbour communities. The mountains of Nilgiris biosphere, harbour the six indigenous tribes of Toda, Kota, Kurumba, Kattunayakan, Paniya and Irula.

They share this high-altitude land with repatriates from Sri Lanka and Badagas. The Indian origin Sri Lankan repatriates involved themselves in monoculture and tea cultivation, but as labourers. On the other hand, the Badagas who migrated from the plains of Mysuru, according to the lore, have now emerged as the strongest community with great economic and social status.

What Minister Ramachandran said

On May 24, Tamil Nadu Forest Minister Ramachandran said that the Badagas cannot be listed as the Scheduled Tribe, in a meeting held in Jagathala a village located in Coonoor. The Minister said, "People from our community have studied well. Younger Badagas are working in many government organisations and others are involved in big businesses. I know a few men who earn Rs 10 crore as annual income.

The constituted committee will inspect the lifestyle and economic background of the community before giving the ST status. So the longest demand of the Badagas to be listed under the ST cannot materialise." His statements drew flak from his community and political leaders from the community condemned the minister's comment. The Minister later attempted to calm the waters by saying that he meant to say that the ST tag was not possible for the Badaga community as long as BJP ruled at the centre.

The Badaga community has been promised to be included in the ST list by all successive governments and all political parties to secure their vote banks. According to the Udhagamandalam MLA

R Ganesh, around 3.5 lakh to 4 lakh Badagas live across the district.

"Our demands have less to do with getting economic benefits from the government and more to do with recognition to be identified as the tribes since we are having unique culture and language," he said. Speaking on Minister Ramachandran's statement, he said that Badaga leaders had approached the Minister when he visited the Nilgiris area along with Vice President Venkaiah Naidu. "At that time, Ramachandran had clarified to Badaga members that the Tribal Welfare department would look into the matter and constitute a committee to work on the ST status. If we were to be declared as ST, then we would demand amendments to the reservation policy to increase (the reservation) percentage," Ganesh said.

The Badagas are classified as Backward Class in Tamil Nadu through constitutional orders. The 1901 census classified them as tribes and the 1911 census denoted Badagas as Hindu animist tribals having a tribal mother tongue. In 1931, they were classified as important primitive tribes of southern India. TNM spoke with political leaders, tribal leaders and activists, to know the possible impact of ST status to the Badaga community on the other communities.

Indigeneity claims of Badagas and what ethnographers say

Scholars and ethnographers have arrived at differing conclusions on the indigeneity of Badagas by researching various aspects and folklores that passed from the one generation to others and from the progenitors. Despite arriving at different conclusions on the indigeneity claims, most of the researchers accept the legends of their migration from low-lying, arid, monsoon vagaries land of

southern Mysuru to the hills of Nilgiris. In "Badagas of Nilgiris: Polemics of Caste and Tribe" paper, N Naveen Kumar, Assistant Professor, Centre for Folk Culture Studies, University of Hyderabad, concluded that the Badaga were not tribes. They migrated as peasants with their cattle and changed themselves according to the land they migrated to and neighbouring communities. "For that time being, they adopted the tribal way of life - gathering, slash and burn agriculture, cattle herding and looked for the opportunities to expand more after their acquaintance with the environment. Thus the journey of Badagas from the Mysore region to Nilgiris and thence in contemporary times have ups and downs. During the formative time of their relocation, they had a temporary setback of living like tribes," reads the study.

What the other tribes in the Nilgiris say

On December 28, 2017, while answering the question in Rajya Sabha, then Minister of State for Tribal Affairs Sudarshan Bhagat listed out the criteria specifications, in a written reply, that are being followed to title a community under the Scheduled Tribes of India. This includes indications of primitive traits, distinctive culture, geographical isolation, shyness of contact with the community at large, and backwardness.

Neeji, a Kota tribe, and a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG) district secretary, Nilgiris said, "They (Badagas) claim that they are native to the Nilgiris. In Nilgiris, they are also one of the inter-dependent mainstream communities. In any worst situation, tribes can survive with what they have and could make things on their own. But, Badagas followed the footsteps of other tribes in the hilly district. Their attire is from Irulas and their dance from Kurumbas.

This millet-cultivating community needs support from Kotas to get all the agricultural tools. Kurumbas inaugurate and do poojas in Badaga temples for every festival. Where is the self-sustainability and unique identity that every tribe proudly boasts? If they got tribal status, it would lead to disaster for the tribal communities in this district."

According to her, the Kota tribe has a population of just 3,270 and live in seven kokals (tribal hamlet of Kotas) of Nilgiris. "Already we face unemployment issues and difficulty in getting seats in educational institutions and government posts, since Tamil Nadu provided a 1% reservation to the 36 tribal communities in the state. This 1% might've worked well when it was split from the SC, back in the 1990s. But now the number of tribes has increased and we are urging the government to rework the reservation policy for tribal welfare," he said.

Toda tribesman, Nilgiris PVTG president Manikandan said that it was not upto them to check the indigeneity claims of Badagas. "The government knows very well who deserves such status or who doesn't. Our fears of losing job opportunities are meaningless. The Tamil Nadu government has listed 36 communities as STs. "But, do we know whether all those communities are living inside the state?" he asked.

While sharing his concerns over misusing ST status to gain favours, he said "I urge the government to take the survey on the tribes in the state and also want them to address the issue of giving tribal community certificates to those who are not identifying themselves as tribes anymore. In Nilgiris, some Toda tribes converted to Christianity during the British era. They stopped speaking the Toda language a long back, and married

partners from non-tribal communities. But, they are obtaining ST certificates for the reservation gains only."

On the social and economic ladder, Todas and Kotas from the Scheduled Tribes list are always ahead of the rest of the tribes. Their population is low and they have lived in areas with access to the modern world and its conveniences. But this is not the same with the Irula, Paniya, Kattunayakkan and Kurumba tribes. Be it Irani, Vachukolli, Kariyasholai, Nadugani, Kuzhimula of Gudalur, where Paniyas and Kattunayakans live, Kurumbas hamlets in Coonoor and Kotagiri, Irulas of Masinagudi and Mudumalai the access to the education is still a daydream. School dropouts are high and the modern-day education system sounds very alien to the children and their environment.

Child marriages are common as the tribes follow it as one of the cultural practices. The rough terrains of the mountains are a barrier to the teachers, medics, and service providers doing their jobs. Lack of sanitation facilities, road access and street light access inside the hamlets lead to the human-wildlife interactions. Sometimes, the tribes fight with the administration using the corpses of their tribespeople trampled by elephants, to get street lights and roads. The hurdles to accessing basic rights cannot be articulated.

It is not about the money or schemes or government posts, but about social justice, according to Mudumalai Tribal Welfare Association member Maadhan. The reservation could help them to get fair opportunities in educational institutions and government jobs. "It takes years of hard work and effort to enrol our kids in the schools. In past years, NGOs came forward to help our kids get a better education. Now, a small number of students

make it to the colleges. But the empowerment of our communities is still low.

The ST status demand from the Badagas would increase the competition and their social and economic status would help them to secure what they want from the government. But we just have to wait for a few more generations to have the community filled with the majority of first-generation graduates. The government announces many schemes to the tribes but nothing reaches us. I don't know if there is any mechanism the government has to monitor whether the end-user benefitted with such schemes," Maadhan said.

If Badagas were listed under the ST, this decision would impact the reservation in education and government jobs. The government allocates huge funds for the tribal communities. But, in the future, it would only benefit the well-educated, well-settled Badagas and not others, said tribal activist Odiyen Lakshmanasamy. Odiyen also pointed out the need for the internal reservation to the Kattunayakan and Paniya tribes to ensure that they received all the benefits from the schemes announced by the government and enjoyed all the rights provided by the constitution.

The condemnation and long battle to secure ST status

Tamil Nadu BJP president Annamalai seized the opportunity to question why the DMK-Congress alliance had not heeded the demand of Badagas when they were in power. In a press statement released on May 29, Annamalai said, "DMK rejected all the demands from the Badaga community when it was in power. After receiving condemnation from various political leaders, the DMK minister changed his stand," he said.

AIADMK coordinator O Panneer Selvam called the DMK's stand a betrayal. He said, "DMK captured the power by getting the votes from the people of Narikuravar, Kuruvikaarar, Vettaikarar, Lambadi, and Badagas by promising if it got elected to power, it would recommend the Union Government to add the communities to the ST list. But now, the minister arbitrarily said Badagas are not likely to be listed in ST."

The state government made a recommendation for the inclusion of the Badagas Community in the list of ST of Tamil Nadu on July 27, 1990. The Ministry of Tribal affairs looked into the matter and started its procedure. But, the Registrar General of India (RGI) raised some concerns over the proposal since the native tribes are not in the favour of inclusion of Badagas into the list. As per OPS's statement, "erstwhile Chief Minister Jayalalitha wrote a letter, on September 5, 2003, to the ministry of tribal affairs to include the Badagas on the ST list. And again in 2011, on July 28, she wrote a letter to the Prime minister on the reinstatement of the tribal status of the Badaga community". Again in 2013, Badagas made a fresh proposal to the ministry of tribal affairs that is now pending at RGI.

3. Tribal Women's right of inheritance



Hindu Succession Act

- The Hindu Succession Act, 1956 deals with the succession and inheritance of property of Hindus in India.
- The act also includes intestate or unwilled (testamentary) succession.
- The Hindu Succession Act of 1956 guarantees equal shares for male and female heirs.

Provisions and applicability of the law

- The provisions of the act are applicable to -
 1. Any person who is Hindu by religion or any of its forms or developments, including a Virashaiva,

Lingayat, or a Brahmo, Prarthna or Arya Samaj follower.

2. Any person who is a Buddhist, Sikh, or Jain by religion.
 3. Any other person who is not a Muslim, Christian, Parsi, Jew, unless it is proved that such person would not be governed by Hindu law or custom.
- The Act does not cover the tribal population of the country i.e. Scheduled Tribes as per the Article 342 of the Constitution.
 - The section 2(2) of the Hindu Succession Act of 1956, says that the provisions of the act is not applicable to Scheduled Tribe members.

What does the law say on female inheritance?

- If a male dies intestate, leaving behind a female heir, the property would devolve according to the provisions of this Act and not the rule of survivorship.
- Under Section 6 of the Act (2005 Amendment), daughters are coparceners by birth and have the same and equal rights as sons irrespective of their marital status and financial position.
- She has all the rights to inherit coparcenary property like a son and would also have to fulfil the liabilities.

Inheritance rights of tribal women

- The Scheduled Tribes of India are governed by customary laws in matters of inheritance, marriage and succession.

- Inheritance rights of tribal women is neither covered under the Hindu Succession Act, 1956 nor under the Indian Succession Act, 1925.
- They are governed by local customary laws which are safeguarded under several provisions under the Indian Constitution.
- The customary tribal laws continue to discriminate against tribal women in the matter of succession.

Why tribal women are denied rights on inheritance of property?

- There are two laws in India namely, the Indian Succession Act, 1925 and the Hindu Succession Act, 1956 which deal with intestate succession of Christians and Hindus, respectively.
- **Indian Succession Act, 1925** - Not explicitly exempts tribes; but state government has the power to exclude any tribal community or groups from its application.
- **Hindu Succession Act, 1956** - Explicitly exempts tribes under section 2(2) of the act.

What did the SC say?

- **SC observation** - A female tribal is entitled to parity with male tribal in intestate succession.
- It directed the Centre to examine the issue and consider amending the provisions of the Hindu Succession Act so as to make it applicable to the members of the Scheduled Tribes.
- **SC reasons** - When the daughter belonging to the nontribal is entitled to equal share in the property of her father.

- Including Scheduled Tribe women in the ambit of the Hindu Succession Act to treat them equally under the law
- **Provisions** - The court ruled that the Act would apply in cases where evidence shows that parties belonging to tribes were practising Hindu customs.
- It excludes cases where the customs of a particular Scheduled Tribe give women an advantageous position.

What are the repercussions of this ruling?

- **Reason against amending Hindu succession Act** - The Court recognizes the concept of Hinduization of the tribals.
- Scheduled Tribes are determined not by religion, but by social, cultural, and economic characteristics and the region or state in which they live.
- This means that communities that practice religions other than Hinduism may still be included in the list of STs.
- The extension of Hindu law over them will potentially impact on the cultural and social identity of these tribes.
- Securing rights over the inherited property should not come at the cost of cultural identity.
- The extension of provision should not lead to the loss of constitutional benefits reserved for STs.

4. Demand of Meities for ST Status



Recently, the **All-Tribal Students' Union of Manipur (ATSUM)** has carried out a solidarity march in order to oppose the demand of **Meitei Community** be included in the **List of State's Scheduled Tribes (ST)**.

- The march broke into **violent clashes after an order from the Manipur High Court**, directing the State to pursue a 10-year-old recommendation to grant ST status to the **non-tribal Meitei community**.

Why does the Meitei Community want ST Status?

- The Meitei community, led by the **Scheduled Tribes Demand Committee of Manipur (STDCM)**, has been demanding ST status since 2012, asking to provide them

with **constitutional safeguards to preserve their culture, language, and identity.**

- The Meiteis argue that they were **recognised as a tribe before the merger of Manipur with India in 1949** but lost their identity after the merger in India.
- As a result of being left out of the ST list, the Meitei community **feels marginalized and victimized** without any constitutional protections.
 - The STDCM has stated that the Meitein/Meetei have been gradually marginalised in their ancestral land.
 - Their population, which was **59% of the total population of Manipur in 1951**, has now been reduced to **44% as per 2011 Census data.**
- They believe that **granting ST status would help preserve their ancestral land, tradition, culture, and language**, and safeguard them against outsiders.

Process of Inclusion under List of STs

- The process for including a community in the **list of ST follows a set of modalities established in 1999.**
- The respective State or Union Territory government must initiate the proposal for inclusion, which then goes to the Union Tribal Affairs Ministry and subsequently to the **Office of the Registrar General of India (ORGI).**
- If the ORGI approves the inclusion, the proposal is then sent to the **National Commission for Scheduled Tribes**, and if they concur, the proposal is forwarded to the **Cabinet for amendment to the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950.**
- In September 2022, the government approved the **inclusion of certain communities in the lists of Scheduled Tribes.** These include:

- **Binjhia** in Chhattisgarh
- **Narikoravan** and **Kurivikkaran** in Tamil Nadu
- **'Betta-Kuruba'** in Karnataka,
- **Hattis** from Himachal Pradesh
- **Gond** Community in Uttar Pradesh

Other Tribal Groups in Manipur opposing the Demand of Meiteis

- **Meitei's Already in Majority:** One reason for this is that the **Meitei community is already dominant in terms of population and political representation**, as most of the Assembly constituencies are in the **valley where the Meiteis live**.
 - The ST communities fear that granting ST status to the Meiteis **would result in them losing job opportunities** and other affirmative actions meant for STs.
- **Meitei Culture has Recognition:** Meitei language is already included in the **8th Schedule of the Constitution**, and some sections of the Meitei community are already classified under **Scheduled Castes (SC)** or **Other Backward Classes (OBC)**, which **gives them access to certain opportunities**.
- **More Political Influence:** They also think that the demand for ST status is a way for the dominant Meitei community from the valley area to **gain political influence and control over the hill areas of the state** by diverting attention from the political demands of **other tribal groups like the Kukis and Nagas**.
 - The Kukis are an ethnic group including multiple tribes originally inhabiting the NE states such as **Manipur, Mizoram and Assam; parts of Burma** (now Myanmar), and **Sylhet district and Chittagong hill tracts of Bangladesh**.

- Wanting to dominate trade and cultural activities in these areas, **Kukis and Nagas often engaged in violent standoffs**, with villages being torched, civilians killed and so on.
- **Eviction of Tribal Groups:** One of the other reasons for the discontent has been the state government's notices since August 2022 claiming that 38 villages in the Churachandpur-Khoupum Protected Forest area are **"illegal settlements" and its residents are "encroachers"**.
 - Following this, the government set out on an eviction drive which resulted in clashes.
 - Kuki groups have claimed that the **survey and eviction is a violation of Article 371C**, which confers some **administrative autonomy to the tribal-dominated hill areas of Manipur**.

Ethnic Composition of Manipur

- **About:**
 - Meiteis are the largest community in Manipur and there are **34 recognized tribes** broadly classified as **'Any Kuki Tribes' and 'Any Naga Tribes'**.
 - The Imphal valley in the state, at the centre of Manipur, accounts for **about 10% of its landmass** and is home primarily to the **Meitei and Meitei Pangals** who constitute roughly **64.6% of the state's population**.
 - The remaining 90% of the state's geographical area comprises **hills surrounding the valley**, which are home to the recognized tribes, making up about **35.4% of the state's population**.
 - While a **majority of the Meiteis are Hindus** followed by **Muslims (8%)**, the 33 recognised tribes, broadly

classified into ‘Any Naga tribes’ and ‘Any Kuki tribes’ are largely Christians.

- Manipur, along with Dimapur district of Nagaland, was brought under the purview of the **ILP System** in December 2019. **ILP is a special permit obligatorily required by “outsiders” from other regions** of the country to enter the notified states.
- **Key Points of Meitei Community:**
 - The Meitei people are also known as Manipuri people.
 - Their primary language is the **Meitei language, which is also called Manipuri** and is the **only official language** of Manipur.
 - They are predominantly settled in the Imphal Valley, although a significant number **reside in other Indian states, such as Assam, Tripura, Nagaland, Meghalaya, and Mizoram.**
 - There is also a notable presence of **Meitei in the neighboring countries of Myanmar and Bangladesh.**
 - The Meitei people are divided into clans, and members of the **same clan do not intermarry.**

Special Provisions under Article 371

- **Article 371** of the Constitution provides “special provisions” for 11 states, including six states of the Northeast (excluding Tripura and Meghalaya).
 - Articles 369-392 (including some that have been removed) appear in Part XXI of the Constitution, titled ‘**Temporary, Transitional and Special Provisions**’.
 - **Article 370** deals with ‘Temporary Provisions with respect to the State of Jammu and Kashmir’;

- Articles 371 and 371A-371J define special provisions with regard to another state (or states).
 - **Article 371I deals with Goa**, but it does not include any provision that can be deemed 'special'.

5. Abusing someone with caste name during argument won't lead to SC/ST Act case: Orissa High Court

A single-judge Bench of Justice R.K. Pattanaik held that intent to humiliate someone specifically because of the SC or ST identity was needed to bring charges under the SC/ST Act

Abusing someone with the name of their caste or uttering the caste name suddenly during an exchange, by itself will not be sufficient to establish an offence under the Prevention of Atrocities (SC/ST) Act, unless there is intent to humiliate the victim specifically for their Scheduled Caste (SC) or Scheduled Tribe (ST) identity, the Orissa High Court has held in a recent judgment.

The March 1 order was passed by a single-judge Bench of Justice R.K. Pattanaik, which essentially quashed charges framed under the SC/ST Act, as prayed by the accused among other things, while also holding that other charges framed against the two accused needed to be tested at trial.

The case pertained to a 2017 incident, where the accused had got involved in an altercation with some other people. The prosecution's case noted that the complainant was returning home, when he was abused, assaulted and terrorised by the accused persons. Eventually, passersby intervened, at which point the accused used the caste slur against one of the passersby.

The High Court noted that the alleged victim was himself not the complainant in the case. Under these circumstances, the high court ruled, "If someone is abused with the name of his caste or the caste is uttered suddenly in course of events and during the incident, in the humble view of the Court, by itself would not be sufficient to hold that any offence under the SC and ST (PoA) Act is made out unless the intention is to insult or humiliate the victim for the reason that he belongs to Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe is prima facie established."

The court thus noted that it would be too much of a stretch and "unjustified" to assume that the accused persons had used the slur with the intention to humiliate the victim in question because of his SC identity.

Justice Pattanaik, ruling thus, also cited the precedent set by the Supreme Court of India in the Hitesh Verma Vs State of Uttarakhand and another, where it was held that intent to humiliate someone because of their caste was a prerequisite for bringing charges under the relevant sections of the SC/ST Act.

6. Assam Woman Has Given 22 Years to Bring Education to Tribal Groups & Help Heal Trauma



Assam-born Ananya Paul Dodmani was moved by the conditions of the tribal communities she grew up with, and has dedicated her life to uplifting and empowering them with Tribal Connect, which has community centres across India.

At a learning centre in Lumding, Assam, children from the local tribes come faithfully every day to engage in a slew of activities such as reading, writing and listening to stories told by the village grandmothers. Some of these children live at the centre itself, with their food taken care of by the attached community kitchen. There are also facilities for mothers who are victims of domestic violence to stay here.

The centre is a hub of laughter, chatter and progress. Similar to this centre in Lumding, 160 others have been set up across Northeast India, West Bengal, Karnataka, and Goa. And at the helm of these Ananya Paul Dodmani, founder of Tribal Connect, a foundation working tirelessly to uplift and empower indigenous communities, like the Kunbis of Goa and Uttar Kannada, the Siddis in Karnataka and Karbi, Dima and Kuki tribes of Assam.

Ananya's is a tale of valour, a journey of persisting every single day to ensure that tribal communities in India finally get the safe space and respect they deserve.

'It started when I was in school.'

The communities that Ananya works with have had a long history of being marginalised. For instance, the Siddi community remains among India's most neglected tribes and have spent generations in abject poverty. Additionally, many of the tribes in Northeast India lack access to basic facilities like education.

Ananya recounts her early schooling years in Assam, where a majority of her friends and neighbours hailed from Santhals and other tribal communities. "There was a certain disparity between their ways of life and our ways of life," she notes.

It wasn't until she was in class 8 that these incidents began to become more vivid. Ananya shares that most of her friends who stayed in the school hostel wouldn't return after the summer holidays. Their parents would tell the school that they had contracted malaria during the holidays and passed away. Ananya would hear these stories with dismay, all the while feeling guilty about her own privileges.



One particular day she was made more aware of these privileges while at a shop with her caretaker. A local tribe woman was buying a product that cost Rs 10. But when she handed the shopkeeper a Rs 20 note, he stubbornly insisted that it was actually a Rs 10 note, and refused to give her change. “I realised these people needed to be taught at least basic things like recognising money denominations, writing their own name, reading bus numbers and train timings, etc,” Ananya says.

And that’s the moment she realised if they couldn’t access these learnings anywhere, she would create a space where they could. I began to look out for kids loitering around and I would ask them to come to the local school, where I found an empty space where I could have them sit and learn basic topics. I would read stories to them too.”

Soon Ananya was joined by other batchmates who were also keen on imparting their knowledge to the local tribal kids. The team she formed would travel across the villages of Northeast India on weekends, raise funds through cultural activities, football matches, and more.

When Ananya passed out of school and went to college, she began convincing her professors to conduct exchange programmes that would also facilitate these children to travel and learn. But then, an incident shook Ananya's world, compelling her to make tribal upliftment a goal she wanted to dedicate her life to.

'My dad was kidnapped.'

Though Ananya had grown up hearing incidents of people from local tribal communities being kidnapped, she only realised the gravity of the situation when her own father was abducted one day in 2002, she says. "You'll never know the heat of the fire until it burns your own house."

"It was traumatic," she recalls. "For seven days, he was tortured, beaten and was only able to escape when he jumped from the third floor of the building where he was being kept hostage. He ran several kilometres to reach the closest railway station to reach home. This incident had a heavy impact on my brain."

While at the time she was fuelled with angst for what had happened, looking back now she says a lack of education compels people to resort to kidnapping others for money. "These unconstitutional people have been brainwashed into doing these things. It's only when one does not have money to put food on the table for their child that they do things that are not constitutional," she adds.

Ananya knew that while she had been teaching those around her the basics of education, there was a dire need for her to increase the numbers and scale to see visible impact. Driven by this fire to create a change, she started her first learning centre in the same village where her father had been held hostage following being kidnapped (a name she avoids mentioning).

She started small, with the resources she had at the time. She explained her plans of setting up a centre where children could learn, and the youth could get employment opportunities to the *gram buda* (headman) of the village. But, she notes, they couldn't envision her dream. So she started under a banyan tree in 2003 with five kids keen on learning.

Today, the same concept is applied at the 160-odd learning centres across India, albeit in a more organised form. Though these centres have existed for years, Ananya formally established the organisation in 2019.

A welcome space for everyone

At the learning centres, language is no barrier. Ananya frequently employs local youth so they can teach the children in a language they understand best. "I collaborate with any NGO or foundation that can help us in bringing about change," she notes.

In 2019, when Ananya got married and moved to South India, she found many tribes facing the same issues as those she had seen in the Northeast. "I began working with tribes such as Siddi, Halakki and Kundi."

She explains that education is free at the learning centres, as are meals thrice a day. There is also a community farming model through which the children and men can grow their own food,

which then goes into the meals. A unique concept is that grandmothers are housed with the children so that they can look after them. This benefits both, says Ananya. At a time, 35 kids can be accommodated at a centre.

There are also community centres for men who don't have jobs. Here, they practise community farming to grow produce and sell it in the markets, while the leftovers are used in the community kitchens. Every learning centre is headed by three local youth, says Ananya so that the centres continue to thrive even while she is away.

This was always something she wanted. "My work is often in conflict zones and I do not want the workings of the community centre to stop should something happen to me."

'I will persist no matter what.'

Aside from the work Ananya does for the community centres she also creates awareness related to menstruation and has reached "over 90,000 tribal women" through her workshops. These include teaching women to make sustainable pads at home, distributing pads to the women in villages and even introducing the concept of eco-friendly menstrual cups.

With 700 volunteers, Tribal Connect is bringing a change in the lives of people in marginalised communities across the country. Ananya was awarded the Karamveer Chakra for her work in 2019.

"Sometimes I see kids who come from broken homes to the centres only for the food. But in 10 days, they are transformed seeing the environment around and we inculcate habits of good learning in them," she explains.

She goes on to recount an instance where one of the girls stopped coming to the learning centre as she started menstruating and the family did not want her to leave home. "I sat outside their house for two nights, caught a cold and fever in the process, but did not budge until they promised she would be back at the centre."

Twenty two long years of persisting and Ananya is still going strong.

How?

"It is your willpower," she affirms. "Our community centre isn't always made up of walls. Sometimes it's just a tent, washed away by the heavy rains every year or trampled upon by elephants at other times. But what sets us apart is that we rebuild every time."

To this she adds, "Everyone has trauma. It's how you let it change your life that makes all the difference. I could have chosen to be a victim because of what happened to my dad, but instead I looked fear in the eyes and chose to start a centre right in that very spot."

7. Various problems of tribal communities in India



- **Resource exploitation:**
 - The policy of liberalization and the new state perceptions of utilization of resources are diametrically opposed to the adivasi worldview of resource exploitation and this divide has only widened further with the intrusion of globalization's market oriented philosophy of development.
 - The recent rapid technological advancement and unrivalled economic and political strength of world capitalism have created favourable conditions for the evasion and extraction of natural resources from the ecologically fragile territories of tribal people.
 - All available laws those relating to lands, forests, minor forest produce, water resources, etc. restrain people from using forests.

- Primary resources such as fuel, fodder and minor forest produce which were available free to villagers are today either non-existent or have to be brought commercially.
- For the Tribals, globalization is associated with rising prices, loss of job security and lack of health care.
- **Displacement:**
 - Since the emergence of liberalization, privatization and globalization (LPG), the areas inhabited by tribal population have been subject to various protests due to involuntary displacement.
 - Thus, forced evictions of tribals make way for mammoth capital-intensive development projects have become a distressing routine and ever-increasing phenomenon.
- **Gaps in Rehabilitation:**
 - There are gaps in the rehabilitation of the tribal community members displaced by development projects.
 - **Only 21 lakh tribal community** members have been rehabilitated so far of the estimated 85 lakh persons displaced due to development projects and natural calamities.
- **Varied Problems across communities :**
 - **Health :** For instance, recently Seven adults of the **KhariaSavar community** died within a span of just two weeks. Their lifespan is approximately 26 years less than the average Indian's life expectancy.
 - Nearly 10% in West Godavari District are affected by Sickle Cell Anaemia.

- **Alienation** : The problems in Red Corridor areas (especially Jharkhand, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh) is governance deficit and unfinished land reforms that has deprived the well being of tribes.
- There is widespread infighting amongst tribes of North-East for natural resources and also of territorial supremacy.
- **Vested interests:**
 - In the name of upgradation of lifestyle of poor indigenous tribal people, the market forces have created wealth for their interests at the cost of livelihood and security of these tribes in the areas.
- **Unemployment:**
 - There is a heavy concentration of industrial and mining activities in the central belt. Despite intense industrial activity in the central Indian tribal belt, the tribal employment in modern enterprises is negligible.
 - Apart from the provisions of Apprenticeship Act, there is no stipulation for private or joint sector enterprises to recruit certain percentage of dispossessed tribal workforce.
 - They are forced onto the ever-expanding low paid, insecure, transient and destitute labour market.
 - About 40 per cent of the tribals of central India supplement their income by participating in this distorted and over exploitative capitalist sector.
- **Affecting social life:**
 - Many more are slowly crushed into oblivion in their homeland or in urban slums. Their economic and cultural survival is at stake.
 - The globalization behemoth has added new dimensions to the vulnerability of India's downtrodden by

exacerbating their social exclusion, and making large segments of tribal groups also vulnerable and excluded.

- **Leading to subnational movements:**

- Inadequate social and economic infrastructure in areas that have insufficient resources for participation in mainstream development also has been at the root of various “sub-national movements” such as the Jharkhand, Uttarakhand and Bodoland.

- **Tribal women:**

- Tribal forest economy is primarily a women’s economy, and it is women who are most directly affected by the corporate exploitation of their traditional lands.
- In poverty stricken tribal areas large scale migration has revealed the increasing movement of young women towards urban centres in search of work.
- Their living conditions are unhygienic, the salary is poor and tribal women are vulnerable to exploitation by unscrupulous agents.
- There is a large number of anemic women amongst the tribes. There is a shortfall of 6,796 sub-centres, 1,267 primary health centres (PHCs) and 309 community health centres (CHCs) in the tribal areas at an all-India level as on March 31, 2015.
- They have become the prime targets of sexual violation by managers, supervisors and even fellow male workers in the plantation industrial sectors.

- **Informal jobs:**

- Construction sites, such as mines and quarries, and industrial complexes spelt doom for the local adivasi communities with the influx of immigrant labourers.

- **Cultural Defacement:**
 - Tribals are being forcefully integrated in to the society leading to them losing their unique cultural features and their habitat threatened.
- **Isolated Tribes** such as **Sentinelese** as still hostile to outsiders. The government must enforce “eyes on hands off” policy in these cases.
 - The **Jarawa community** is facing acute population decline due to entry of outsiders into the area(**The Andaman Trunk Road**, among other projects, has cut into the heart of the Jarawa reserve).
- **Denotified, semi-nomadic and nomadic tribes** are yet to be included as Scheduled Tribes.
 - Their traditional occupations (snake charming, street acrobatics with animals) are now illegal and alternative livelihood options are not provided.
- Certain tribes have been characterised as **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)** (earlier known as Primitive Tribal Groups) on the basis of their greater ‘vulnerability’ even among the tribal groups. There are 75 such tribes in India.

8. After 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 Bhadradri-Kothagudem 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 Rao, 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.

9. India's Northeast Remains on Edge After Ethnic Clashes

Shootings and arson continued Monday in India's northeastern state of Manipur, where clashes between security forces and tribal insurgents the previous day killed five people, media reports said.

The state, which borders Myanmar, has been roiled by violence for weeks after members of mostly Christian tribal groups clashed with the Hindu majority over its demands for special economic benefits.

More than 75 people have been killed in the fighting, the state's worst ethnic clashes in decades. Hundreds have been injured and more than 35,000 have been displaced.

Authorities said Indian Home Minister Amit Shah was expected to arrive in the state capital, Imphal, on Monday evening to

review the security situation and help restore peace in the state, where a curfew is in place and the internet has been shut off to stop rumors from spreading.



In this image made from video, smoke rises from burning houses in Manipur, India, May 28, 2023.

The violence prompted the federal government to rush thousands of paramilitary and army troops to the state, and many of the recent deaths were caused by the security forces.

The state's chief minister, N. Biren Singh, said Sunday that 40 Kuki insurgents were killed by government troops. It was not clear whether the figure was part of the overall death toll.

"The fight is not between communities, it is between Kuki rebels and government security forces," Singh told reporters.

He said insurgents fired at civilians and burned down homes, prompting the security forces to counter their attacks.

The clashes occurred after the security forces began searching for weapons looted from police stations, the Press Trust of India news agency reported.

Homes and buildings burned in some villages on Sunday, with plumes of grey smoke filling the skies. Troops also fired in the air and lobbed tear gas shells to disperse a mob that attempted to take weapons from a police station near Imphal, said Sapam Ranjan, a state government spokesperson. He said 1,041 guns and 7,500 rounds of ammunition were looted in recent weeks, with authorities recovering about 500 weapons so far.

Gunfire was reported Monday in districts near the capital, army officials said. Homes were also set ablaze in the Leimakhong area, they said.

The violence first broke out on May 3 after protests by more than 50,000 Kukis and members of other predominantly Christian tribal communities against the majority Meitei Hindu community's demand for a special status that would give them benefits including access to forest land, cheap bank loans, health and educational facilities, and more government jobs.

The Kuki and other minority leaders say the Meitei community is comparatively well-off and that granting them more privileges would be unfair. The Meiteis say employment quotas and other benefits for the tribespeople would be protected.

Two-thirds of the state's 2.5 million people live in a valley that comprises roughly 10% of the state's total area. The Kuki and other tribes mainly live in the surrounding hill districts.

10. Fight for land and identity

- Kukis - the hill tribe's traditional migratory patterns and engagement in shifting agriculture have played out in conflicts within Manipur's complex hill-valley divide.

Kuki Tribe

- It is **one of the ethnic groups that inhabit the northeastern regions of India, Myanmar and Bangladesh.**
- They are mainly found in the **states of Manipur and Mizoram in India, Chin State in Myanmar, and Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh.**
- They are **also known as Chin or Mizo people**, and they share a common ancestry and culture.
- They are part of the **larger Zo people, along with the Chin and Mizo tribes.**
- The Kuki tribe has a rich and diverse history, culture and tradition that reflect their adaptation to the hilly and forested terrain they live in.
- They **speak various dialects of the Chin-Kuki-Mizo language family**, which belong to the Tibeto-Burman branch of the Sino-Tibetan languages.

Challenges

- The Kuki tribe has a **long history of migration and settlement in** different parts of South Asia.
- The Kuki tribe has faced many challenges and conflicts in their history, such as the Kuki Rebellion (1917-1919) against British rule, the Kuki-Naga clashes (1960s-1990s) over land and identity issues, and the Kuki-Zomi ethnic violence (1997-1998) that resulted in displacement and loss of lives.

Political structure

- The Kuki tribe has a unique social and political structure that is **based on clans, villages and chiefs**.
- The clan is the basic unit of kinship and identity, and it is traced through the paternal line.
- The village is the primary unit of administration and governance, and it is headed by a hereditary chief who has executive, judicial and religious authority.
- The chief also owns all the land and resources of the village, and he distributes them among his subjects according to their needs and merits.

Living style

- The Kuki tribe follows a **traditional way of life** that is closely connected to nature and their environment.
- They **practice jhum or shifting cultivation**, where they clear patches of forest land by burning and growing crops such as rice, maize, millet, etc.
- They also hunt wild animals and collect forest products for their subsistence and trade.

Culture

- They **celebrate various festivals throughout the year** to mark important occasions such as harvests, seasons, births, deaths, marriages, etc.
- Some of the major festivals are **Kut (post-harvest festival), Chavang Kut (autumn festival), Mim Kut (maize festival)**,
- They perform various dances such as **Lamkut (group dance), Chongloi (sword dance), Pheiphit (war dance), etc.**
- They play musical instruments such as khuang (drum), gong (cymbal), tangkul (flute), etc.

Social Structure

- The Kuki people have a **hierarchical social structure based on clans and lineages**. Each clan has its name and emblem and traces its origin to a common ancestor.
- The clans are further divided into sub-clans and lineages. The clan system regulates marriage alliances, inheritance rights and social obligations among the Kuki people.
- The Kuki society is also **patriarchal and patrilineal**, which means that descent and inheritance are traced through the male line. The eldest son inherits his father's property and status, while the youngest son stays with his parents and takes care of them.
- The Kuki villages are usually small and autonomous, each ruled by its chief or headman.

Religion

- The Kuki people have a varied religious backgrounds, as they have been influenced by different faiths over time. Traditionally, the **Kuki people followed animism**, which is a belief in the existence of spirits in nature and ancestors.
- They also practised rituals such as animal sacrifices, ancestor worship and festivals to appease their gods and spirits.
- With the **arrival of Christian missionaries in the late 19th and early 20th centuries**, many Kuki people converted to **Christianity, especially Protestantism**.
- Today, Christianity is the predominant religion among the Kuki people, with some significant minorities following animism or other faiths such as Judaism or Islam.

11. State-level Himachal Day function at Kaza to connect with tribals, says CM Sukhu



Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu said the State-level Himachal Day function would serve as a suitable platform to present the culture, traditions and specialities of our tribal areas to the country and the world.

The Himachal Pradesh government is all set to celebrate Himachal Day function today in Kaza of Lahaul-Spiti district. Through the state level event, the government is aiming to reach out to people living in remote and far-flung areas of the state and deepen the cultural connect with them, said chief minister (CM) Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu.

The chief minister said this would serve as a suitable platform to present the culture, traditions and specialities of our tribal areas to the country and the world. Sukhu said during his two-day stay in the region, he will also get an opportunity to know the expectations and aspirations of the locals to strengthen the basic

facilities for the residents living in the area.

The rich cultural heritage and places of historical importance of the tribal areas of the state are the main centres of attraction for domestic, and foreign tourists. Special attention is also being paid to infrastructure in these areas for the convenience of tourists, he added.

Sukhu said that equitable and balanced development of scheduled areas and the welfare of tribal people is top priority of the state government. The tribal area in Himachal Pradesh covers 42.49% of the state's total area and the population density is seven persons per square kilometre.

The population of the tribal community in the state is 5.71% of the total population and for the social, and economic upliftment of the tribal community, nine percent of the state's total plan amount has been earmarked for the tribal area development sub-plan.

Himachal Pradesh's Seven Major Tribes

Kinnaur Tribe, Gujjar Tribe, Lahauli Tribe, Gaddi Tribe, Swangla Tribe, Pangwal, and Khampa Tribes.

Tribe of Kinnauras

Kinnar is a blend of the Sanskrit words Kim and Nara, which imply 'what kind of man?' derived from traditions of a mythological being with a human body and a horse's head, or vice versa Kinnaur is another district in Himachal Pradesh in which these tribal tribes are concentrated. Kinnauri tribes in

Himachal Pradesh are thought to be the descendants of the Kinners of Vedic times. They are based on cultural dances that are also performed in the National Capital on Independence Day. Their fundamental signatures of Kinnauri traditional garments are the 'Dohru' stall and the Bushehri Topi. The Tibetan accent has an impact on their ethnic language. The majority of this tribal group in Himachal Pradesh practise Buddhism or Hinduism as their religion.

The Gujjar Tribe

The Gujjar Tribes are the individuals of west Himachal Pradesh. Particularly from the districts of Chamba and Kangra. Originally, the Gujjar tribes of Himachal Pradesh led nomadic lives, moving with their cattle and other belongings. However, they are currently established in grasslands or hills depending on the favorable seasons. Historically, the Gujjar tribes were known as the plains immigrants who fled to the hills in response to the Huna invasion.

Tribe of Lahauli

Lahauli Tribes are indigenous to Himachal Pradesh's Lahaul region, as the name denotes. They are thought to be the descendants of Mongoloids. Agriculture, herding, and weaving are the mainstays of their existence. Their brilliant, multicolored woven goods will wow you. This is one of the most well-known tribes in Himachal, with a unique Milliseconds system in households.

The system was efficient at first, but it is gradually becoming obsolete as modernization knocks on its doors. Their society was organized into clans such as Gotra and Kul. Tribal individuals of various clans were permitted to marry, but those of the same clan

were not permitted to do so because they would be considered members of the same family. The Lahaul Tribes are well-known throughout the country for their potato output.

The Gaddi Tribe

Gaddi Tribes are primarily found in Himachal Pradesh's Dhauladhar region. This tribal tribe is mostly concentrated on the river's banks in Ravi and Budhil. The Gaddi tribes of Himachal Pradesh are described as Mughal-era immigrants who escaped to the hills. They encompass all types of Hindus and have a caste structure.

Swangla Tribes

Swangla tribes are modern scheduled tribes of Himachal who live in the City and nearby Valley along the Chandra Bhaga river. They primarily speak Manchhad languages. They were thought to live in the most northern reaches of Himalayan tracts.

Pangwal Tribes

Pangwals are thought to be Pangi Valley dwellers. Every home in this town owns a 'Choori,' which is a hybrid between a yak and a cow. Their largest event, 'Tyane,' is held in August. 'Hishoo' is their new year's day, which is celebrated with intense excitement and many extended night traditional dances. They now have one of the contentious practices of marriage by capture, which is mostly practiced in this tribal community's Pith or Chori systems.

Khampa Tribes

Himachal Pradesh's Khampa tribes migrated from Tibet. They settled in Himachal Pradesh's Kullu, Chamba, Kinnaur, and

Lahaul districts. Gradually, each region has its own phrase to describe Himachal Pradesh's tribal communities. They are called 'Bauddh' in Kullu valley. They are known as 'Piti Khampa' in the Spiti division. They go by different names in different parts of the world, but their unusual facial features set them apart.

Bodh Tribes Of Himachal Pradesh

The Bodh people, commonly called Khas Bodhi, are indeed a Himachal Pradesh ethnic group. They can be found in the Lahaul and Spiti area, primarily in the and, but also, to a lesser extent, in the Miyar Valley, the higher reaches of Pangi in Himachal Pradesh, and the Paddar valley in Jammu and Kashmir. Their religion is mostly Buddhist, with atavistic and Shaivite rituals thrown in for good measure. Although caste regulations are not as strict as in the plains, they are designated as Rajput, Thakur, or Kshetri. Historically, the rulers of Chamba, Kullu, or Ladakh bestowed the titles of Rana, Wazir, or Thakur on three or four notable families in the area for the purposes of overall management and revenue collection.

12. 34,000 yoga mats procured from tribal artisans to be used at govt Yoga Day events



On Wednesday, 34,000 yoga mats sourced exclusively from tribal artisans in the country will be used at government events to promote tribal products

With an aim to promote tribal products, 34,000 **yoga mats** sourced exclusively from tribal artisans in the country will be used at government events to mark International Yoga Day on Wednesday.

Tribal Affairs Ministry's Tribal Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (TRIFED), a national-level cooperative body mandated to

bring about the socio-economic development of tribals of the country, has procured yoga mats adorned with designs and motifs representative of various tribal communities.

The Ministry of Ayush will employ these mats for a range of events, workshops, and training programs organized on International Yoga Day, according to a statement released by the ministry.

This initiative underscores the government's commitment to uplift **tribal communities** and celebrate India's vibrant cultural heritage. Each mat serves as a vibrant testament to the diverse cultural legacy of India's tribes, encapsulating their stories, folklore, and artistic prowess, the ministry noted.

Among the featured mats are the Madurkathi mats, also known as Madur, which are intricately woven in West Bengal from a reed called Madur Kottir. Renowned for their non-conductive properties and exceptional sweat-absorbing capabilities, these mats are indispensable in West Bengal's hot and humid climate and hold great significance in religious rituals.

Additionally, the government events will showcase Sabai Grass yoga mats, symbolizing the deep connection between the tribals of Mayurbhanj, Odisha, and the lush landscapes that envelop them. These mats, renowned for their unique composition, offer exceptional absorbency and comfort, rendering them a sustainable and indispensable companion for yoga enthusiasts and practitioners.

Through this endeavor, the Indian government aims to promote indigenous craftsmanship, empower tribal artisans, and foster a sense of pride in the **nation's cultural heritage**.

13. TRIFED and Ministry of Ayush collaborate to promote tribal artistry

Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India Ltd. (TRIFED) has recently collaborated with **Ministry of Ayush** to supply **34,000 yoga mats** during **9th International Yoga day**.



9th International Yoga Day:

- Theme of International Yoga Day is 'Yoga for Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' which indicates Indian socio-cultural heritage.
- Ocean Ring of Yoga:

- Under this **Indian Navy and Merchant ships** will organise **yoga** demonstrations at port, in vessels of **friendly countries**.
- **Arctic to Antarctica:**
 - This programme will be organised by Ministry of External Affairs along with the **Ministry of Ayush**
 - The **yoga** will be organised in countries falling in and around the **Prime Meridian line** besides **UN member countries**.
- **Yoga at the North Pole and South Pole:**
 - This programme will be organised by **MoES** at:
 - **Himadri**- the Indian research base in the **Arctic**
 - **Bharati** - the Indian research base in the **Antarctica**
- **Yoga Bharatmala:**
 - Under this, Army troops along with Indo-Tibetan Border Police (**ITBP**), Border Security Force (**BSF**), and Border Roads Organization (**BRO**) will make a **Yoga chain**.
- **Yoga Sagarmala:**
 - The yoga demonstration will be performed along the **Indian coastline**.
 - There will be a Yoga demonstration on the **flight deck** of **INS Vikrant**.

About the collaboration:

- The **34,000 yoga mats** were sourced from **tribal artisans** hailing from **diverse regions** of India with distinct **designs** and **motifs** that represent their **respective communities**.
- Each mat will encapsulate **tribal cultural heritage**, their **stories, folklore**, and artistic legacy.

Significance of the collaboration:

- The collaboration will empower tribal communities and act as a proponent of **India's rich cultural heritage**.
- The endeavour enhances the **economic prospects of tribal artisans** and safeguards and **promotes their unique artistic traditions**.

Mats to be used and their tribal connections:

Discovering the artistry of the Santhal Community

- The **Santhal** community's authentic craftsmanship of **Madurkathi** will be incorporated in the mats.
- The Madurkathi is an integral component of **Medinipur's** renowned **weaving heritage**.
- The Madurkathi is handcrafted by **skilled tribals of West Bengal**.
- These mats intricately **intertwine cotton yarn** as vertical threads (**tana**) and **Madurkathi** as horizontal threads (**bona**).
 - It is similar to the intricate **craftsmanship** involved in weaving a **saree** using a **Fly Shuttle Handloom**.
- The mats have **non-conductive** nature and exceptional **sweat-absorbing properties**, this makes them **indispensable** in West Bengal's **hot and humid climate**.

Sabai Grass:

- The **Sabai Grass** is found in the **Simplipal Reserve**.
- The Sabai grass is used for many **products** such as mats, baskets, cots, furniture, wall hangings, decorative boxes, and coasters.

Sabai Grass Yoga Mats:

- The **Sabai Grass Yoga Mats** are created by the Tribals of **Mayurbhanj, Odisha**.
- The **Sabai Grass Yoga Mats** are crafted with **natural materials**.
- The **Sabai Grass Yoga Mats** showcase the **rich artistic traditions** passed down through **generations**.
- The creation of Sabai grass mats begins with the process of **harvesting** and **sorting** the grass.
- Afterward, the grass is **dried** and treated to enhance its **pliability**.
- Skilled weaver uses a **loom** with **vertical warp threads**, which interlaces **Sabai grass weft threads horizontally** using **twining techniques** that ensures **long-lasting durability**.
- To introduce many **colours** and **patterns**, dyed grass is skilfully incorporated.
- The weavers maintain **precise tension** as they **weave**, carefully **trimming** excess grass and securing **loose ends**.
- Each finished mat undergoes quality **inspections** and may receive **optional treatments** for added **durability** and **aesthetic appeal**.
- The **Sabai Grass Yoga Mats** are known for being **lightweight** and **flexibility**.

14. Who Are Bru Refugees And What Has The Government Done To Rehabilitate Them



The Tripura Election department on Thursday appealed to Bru refugees staying in relief camps in the state to go to resettlement villages and get their names enrolled in the electoral rolls during the special revision of voters' list, which is underway until December 8.

This is a significant step towards enfranchising the Bru refugees to enable them to participate in the 2023 Assembly elections in Tripura. To this end, with this initiative, the state election commission targets to enroll as many as 20,000 Bru voters of around 6,300 families.

"Altogether 7,165 Bru names have already been enrolled in Tripura while the remaining are expected to get registered in the state's electoral rolls during the special summary revision", Additional Chief Electoral Officer, Subhasish Bandhopadyay told PTI on Thursday.

This comes against the backdrop of an order from the Tripura High Court last month, that directed the state government led by Chief Minister Manik Shah to grant voting rights to Brus in the state after their 25-year long legal battle.

Who are Bru refugees?

Brus, also referred to as Reangs, are a tribal community indigenous to northeast India and have historically resided in parts of Mizoram, Tripura, and Assam. In the state of Tripura, the Brus are a designated Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG).

Most Brus residing in Tripura today have suffered more than two decades of internal displacement, fleeing ethnic persecution primarily from the neighboring state of Mizoram. It all started in 1995, when the Young Mizo Association and the Mizo Students' Association demanded that Brus be eliminated from Mizoram's electoral rolls as they were not indigenous inhabitants. Being ethnically distinct from the majority Mizos, the Brus are often referred to as "*Vai*" in the state, meaning outsiders or non-Mizos.

Tensions escalated after the Brus retaliated against the Mizos' attempts to disenfranchise them, and organized themselves into an armed group, the Bru National Liberation Front, and a political entity, the Bru National Union. They also demanded the creation of a separate Bru Autonomous District Council (ADC) in western Mizoram as per the provisions of the sixth schedule of the Indian Constitution.

However, their attempts at seeking greater autonomy were foiled and resultant ethnic clashes forced many Reangs in Mamit, Kolasib and Lunglei districts of Mizoram to migrate to neighboring Tripura in 1997. Today, roughly 35,000 Reangs

continue to reside in north Tripura's Kanchanpur camp as refugees, as per Home Ministry estimates.

Have there been any attempts to resettle the Brus?

The state governments, along with the union government have made multiple attempts to send Brus back to their homeland in Mizoram. But until 2014, following eight rounds of resettlement, only an estimated 5,000 individuals, or 1622 Bru-Reang families returned to Mizoram in various batches.

In July 2018, the governments of Tripura, Mizoram, and the central government concluded a quadripartite pact with Bru community representatives to resettle refugees in Mizoram. This was however opposed by not only native Mizo groups, but also by the Reangs who feared threats to life and further ethnic repression in their home state.

Efforts were still made to pursue the terms of this pact. In fact, as per a report published in the *Indian Express*, in October 2019, the supply of free ration to relief camps was halted on instructions of the Home Ministry in a bid to hastily complete the repatriation of refugees, which resulted in at least six starvation deaths.

Sensing a failure of the 2018 pact, the four groups once again came together in January 2020 to sign another quadripartite pact to resettle the Brus, this time in the state of Tripura. The central government earmarked a Rs 600 crore package to aid the rehabilitation efforts, and the Bru families were promised a residential plot, a fixed deposit of Rs 4 lakh, Rs 1.5 lakh grant to construct their houses, as well as free ration and monthly stipend of Rs 5,000 for a period of two years.

Additionally, the renewed 2020 pact also promised to include the displaced Reangs in the electoral rolls in Tripura, which Thursday's orders hope to implement.

What has been the progress on their resettlement?

Under the 2020 pact, the governments identified 16 potential resettlement locations in four districts of Tripura – North Tripura, Dhalai, South Tripura and Gomati. According to a report published in *The Hindu* in April 2021, the first batch of 515 refugees were provided settlements in Haduklapura and Duklai villages in Dhalai district.

But two years on since the pact, its implementation has remained laggardly and the community is yet to see complete rehabilitation. On Wednesday, Punit Agarwal, Principal Secretary under the Government of India, revealed that the Home Ministry has extended the deadline for the 2020 pact by a few months. The new deadline to resettle the Reang community in Tripura is now February 28, 2023.

Agarwal, in a comment to *India Today*, further revealed that so far, “4,171 families have been resettled in 10 locations already identified. The remaining 2,131 families are in the process of rehabilitation.” He added that the government has facilitated the construction of over 2,000 houses and necessary infrastructural facilities, including roads, electricity, drinking water, schools, Anganwadi centres, sub-health centres, ration shops etc. will also soon be provided in the designated rehabilitation areas.

Are there any loopholes in the resettlement pact?

Immediately after the pact was signed on January 16 in 2020, locals in Tripura, led by the Joint Movement Committee, staged

anti-Bru settlement demonstrations across the state. They opposed the pact and alleged that it would disrupt the local demography, social, ecological and environmental balance of the region, specifically in North Tripura district.

State-wide strikes opposing the pact have sprung up repeatedly, and have at times taken a violent turn. For instance, in November 2020, a Fire Services officer, who was beaten by the angry mobs, succumbed to his injuries.

More recently, on November 6, more than 100 villagers staged an indefinite strike in Agartala to voice their opposition to the state government's decision to resettle 800 families of displaced Brus in a village in South Tripura's Santirbazar subdivision, Times of India reported.

Besides the locals' grievances related to the resettlement plan, analysts point out that avoiding settlement at the conflict site is likely to fuel further tensions for the Brus residing in Mizoram, and may even force a further exodus and trigger a deeper humanitarian crisis