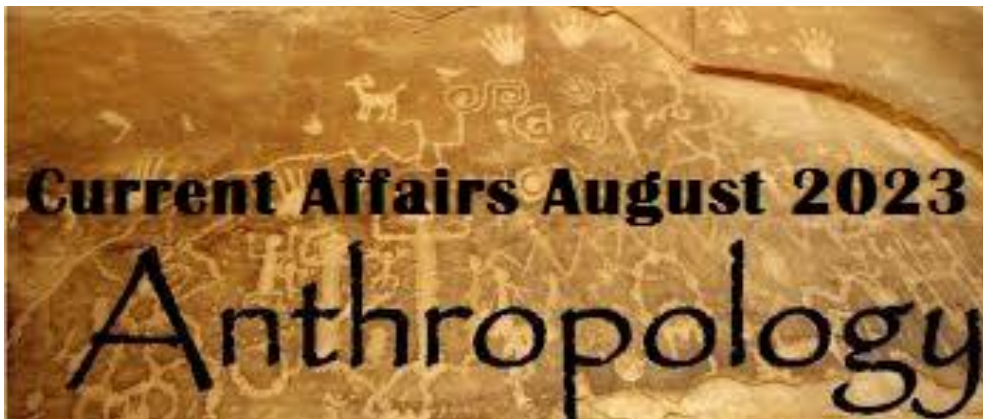


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PAPER -1

PHYSICAL & ARCHAEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

1. Key role of ice age cycles in early human interbreeding



Recent paleogenomic research revealed that interbreeding was common among early human species. However, little was known about when, where, and how often this hominin interbreeding took place. Using paleoanthropological evidence, genetic data, and supercomputer simulations of past climate, a team of international researchers has found that interglacial climates and corresponding shifts in vegetation created common habitats for Neanderthals and Denisovans, increasing their chances for interbreeding and gene flow in parts of Europe and central Asia.

A study published in *Science* indicates that climatic shifts over the past 400,000 years have influenced Neanderthal and Denisovan interbreeding.

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often this hominin interbreeding took place. Using paleoanthropological evidence, genetic data, and supercomputer simulations of past climate, a team of international researchers has found that interglacial climates and corresponding shifts in vegetation created common habitats for Neanderthals and Denisovans, increasing their chances for interbreeding and gene flow in parts of Europe and central Asia.

Contemporary humans carry in their cells a small amount of DNA derived from Neanderthals and Denisovans. "Denny," a 90,000-year-old fossil individual, recently identified as the daughter of a Denisovan father and a Neanderthal mother, bears testimony to the possibility that interbreeding was quite common among early human species. But when, where, and at what frequency did this interbreeding take place?

In a recent study published in *Science* on 10 August 2023, researchers from Korea and Italy have joined hands to answer this question. Using fossil data, supercomputer simulations of past climate, and insights obtained from genomic evidence, the team was able to identify habitat overlaps and contact hotspots of these early human species. Dr. Jiaoyang Ruan, Postdoctoral Researcher at IBS Center for Climate Physics (ICCP), South Korea, explains, "Little is known about when, where, and how frequently Neanderthals and Denisovans interbred throughout their shared history. As such, we tried to understand the potential for Neanderthal-Denisovan admixture using species distribution models that bring extensive fossil, archeological, and genetic data together with transient Coupled General Circulation Model simulations of global climate and biome."

The researchers found that Neanderthals and Denisovans had different environmental preferences to start with. While Denisovans were much more adapted to colder environments, such as the boreal forests and the tundra region in northeastern Eurasia, their Neanderthal cousins preferred the warmer temperate forests and grasslands in the southwest. However, shifts in the Earth's orbit led to changes in climatic conditions and hence vegetation patterns. This triggered the migration of both these hominin species towards geographically overlapping habitats, thus increasing the chance of their interbreeding.

The researchers further used insights gained from their analysis to determine the contact hotspots between Neanderthals and Denisovans. They identified Central Eurasia, the Caucasus, the Tianshan, and the Changbai mountains as the likely

hotspots. Identification of these habitat overlaps also helped the researchers place 'Denny' within the climatic context and even confirmed the other known episodes of genetic interbreeding. The researchers also noted that the Denisovans and Neanderthals would have had a high probability of contact in the Siberian Altai during ~ 340-290, ~240-190 and ~130-80 thousand years ago.

To further elucidate the factors that triggered the 'east-west interbreeding seesaw,' the team examined the change in vegetation patterns over Eurasia over the past 400 thousand years. They observed that elevated atmospheric CO₂ concentrations and mild interglacial conditions caused an eastward expansion of the temperate forest into central Eurasia, and the dispersal of Neanderthals into Denisovan lands. On the contrary, lower CO₂ concentrations and corresponding harsher glacial climate potentially caused a fragmentation of their habitats, leading to lesser interactions and interbreeding events.

"Pronounced climate-driven zonal shifts in the main overlap region of Denisovans and Neanderthals in central Eurasia, which can be attributed to the response of climate and vegetation to past variations in atmospheric CO₂ and northern hemisphere ice-sheet volume, influenced the timing and intensity of potential interbreeding events," remarks senior author Axel Timmermann, Director, ICCP and Professor at Pusan National University, South Korea.

In summary, the study shows that climate-mediated events have played a crucial role in facilitating gene flow among early human species and have left lasting impressions on the genomic ancestry of modern-day humans.

2. How ancient, recurring climate changes may have shaped human evolution



Shifting habitats implicate a disputed ancestor in the rise of *Homo sapiens* and Neandertals

Recurring climate changes may have orchestrated where *Homo* species lived over the last 2 million years and how humankind evolved.

Ups and downs in temperature, rainfall and plant growth promoted ancient hominid migrations within and out of Africa that fostered an ability to survive in unfamiliar environments, say climate physicist and oceanographer Axel Timmermann and colleagues. Based on how the timing of ancient climate variations matched up with the comings and goings of different fossil *Homo* species, the researchers generated a novel – and controversial – outline of human evolution. Timmermann, of Pusan National University in Busan, South Korea, and his team present that scenario April 13 in *Nature*.

Here's how these scientists tell the story of humankind, starting roughly 2 million years ago. By that time, *Homo erectus* had already begun to roam outside Africa, while an East African species called *H. ergaster* stuck close to its home region. *H. ergaster* probably evolved into a disputed East African species called *H. heidelbergensis*, which split into southern and northern branches between 850,000 and 600,000 years ago. These migrations coincided with warmer, survival-enhancing climate shifts that occur every 20,000 to 100,000 years due to variations in Earth's orbit and tilt that modify how much sunlight reaches the planet.

Then, after traveling north to Eurasia, *H. heidelbergensis* possibly gave rise to Denisovans around 430,000 years ago, the researchers say. And in central Europe, harsh habitats created by recurring ice ages spurred the evolution of *H. heidelbergensis* into Neandertals between 400,000 and 300,000 years ago. Finally, in southern Africa between 310,000 and 200,000 years ago, increasingly harsh environmental conditions accompanied a transition from *H. heidelbergensis* to *H. sapiens*, who later moved out of Africa.

But some researchers contend that *H. heidelbergensis*, as defined by its advocates, contains too many hard-to-categorize fossils to qualify as a species.

An alternative view to the newly proposed scenario suggests that, during the time that *H. heidelbergensis* allegedly lived, closely related *Homo* populations periodically split up, reorganized and bred with outsiders, without necessarily operating as distinct biological species. In this view, mating among *H. sapiens* groups across Africa starting as early as 500,000 years ago eventually produced a physical makeup typical of people today. If so, that would undermine the validity of a neatly branching evolutionary tree of *Homo* species leading up to *H. sapiens*, as proposed by Timmermann's group.

The new scenario derives from a computer simulation of the probable climate over the last 2 million years, in 1,000-year intervals, across Africa, Asia and Europe. The researchers then examined the relationship between simulated predictions of what ancient habitats were like in those regions and the dates of known hominid fossil and archaeological sites. Those sites range in age from around 2 million to 30,000 years old.

Previous fossil evidence indicates that *H. erectus* spread as far as East Asia and Java. Timmermann's climate simulations suggest that *H. erectus*, as well as *H. heidelbergensis* and *H. sapiens*, adapted to increasingly diverse habitats during extended travels. Those migrations stimulated brain growth and cultural innovations that "may have made [all three species] the global wanderers that they were," Timmermann says.

The new habitat simulations also indicate that *H. sapiens* was particularly good at adjusting to hot, dry regions, such as northeastern Africa and the Arabian Peninsula.

Climate, habitat and fossil data weren't sufficient to include additional proposed *Homo* species in the new evolutionary model, including *H. floresiensis* in Indonesia and *H. naledi* in South Africa

It has proven difficult to show more definitively that ancient environmental changes caused transitions in hominid evolution. For instance, a previous proposal that abrupt climate shifts resulted in rainy, resource-rich stretches of southern Africa's coast, creating conditions where *H. sapiens* then evolved still lacks sufficient climate, fossil and other archaeological evidence.

Paleoanthropologist Rick Potts of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., has developed another influential theory about how climate fluctuations influenced human evolution that's still open to debate. A series of climate-driven booms and busts in resource availability, starting around 400,000 years ago in East Africa, resulted in *H. sapiens* evolving as a species with a keen ability to survive in unpredictably shifting environments, Potts argues. But the new model indicates that ancient *H. sapiens* often migrated into novel but relatively stable environments, Timmermann says, undermining support for Potts' hypothesis, known as variability selection.

The new findings need to be compared with long-term environmental records at several well-studied fossil sites in Africa and East Asia before rendering a verdict on variability selection, Potts says.

The new model "provides a great framework" to evaluate ideas such as variability selection, says paleoclimatologist Rachel Lupien of Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory in Palisades, N.Y. That's especially true, Lupien says, if researchers can specify whether climate and ecosystem changes that played out over tens or hundreds of years were closely linked to ancient *Homo* migrations.

3. Forensic Anthropology in a Changing Climate

In 2018, a wildfire swept through Northern California. Forensic anthropologists were called in to identify skeletal remains in a devastated recovery scene. The devastating effects of this fire are inextricably tied to both climate change and behavior. The western United States has experienced warmer temperatures and prolonged dry seasons with interspersed winter rain that serves to increase the fuel load through plant growth. These climatic variables coupled with increased development in once rural areas set the stage for wildfires to have a devastating

impact, with catastrophic results in California.

Based on lessons learned from the logistical challenges associated with recoveries from these fires, we and other anthropologists are also helping to develop legislation to shape future responses to similar mass disasters, including writing guidelines for wildfire scene recovery, mass fatality management for wildfire-related fatalities, and laboratory identification procedures. As climate change continues to impact cultures and environments, anthropology as a holistic discipline, and the skills and knowledge of anthropologists, will become increasingly important. For example, anthropologists can study the prehistory and history of climate and fire management through archaeological and paleoenvironmental work.

They can also explore the global impacts of climate change on human migration and conflict. Through our combined efforts, anthropologists are in an excellent position to assist in the immediate mitigation of challenges as well as speak to past climate change, biological impacts, and the cultural consequences of this devastating global crisis. Forensic anthropologists are increasingly being called on for their skills to assist in mass fatality incidents. With escalating devastation related to climate change and human behavior, demand will only continue to grow.

Large wildfires like those seen in California and in Australia over the last several years, are only one component of these disasters. There are also likely to be extreme weather events, droughts, floods, and landslides related to climate change. While forensic anthropologists are prepared to offer their skills in these trying times, the hope is that we will not have to. During recovery operations, anthropologists were deployed as a means of triage to quickly identify human remains from nonhuman remains or other construction debris, and thus identify areas for concentrated recovery efforts.

For example, in some cases animal remains such as pets or other wildlife were found in the same area as cow bones from a kitchen refrigerator or deer antlers used as home decoration. It was important for recovery teams to quickly identify material as nonhuman remains and be able to move to the next area of interest. Once human remains were identified, anthropologists were embedded with coroner, sheriff, or search and rescue units to assist in the recovery. As forensic anthropologists, we are also trained to systematically process, recover, and document the remains and other relevant material to aid in an identification. This material could include surgical implants (a knee or hip replacement) or other

personal items on the individual (documentation or jewelry). Each of these skills supports efficient recovery efforts as well as providing necessary documentation to assist in subsequent osteological analyses. Forensic anthropologists were also involved in overall planning and logistics to support recovery efforts, including helping to manage individual teams from the incident command center.

4. Gene Editing: Do We Have The Right to Genetically Enhance Our Children?

Technological advancements have blurred the borders of natural biological processes by giving humans more control. One such area is that of gene editing that allows us to modify the child's genetic make up to not only prevent diseases, and lead to a healthier life, but also personality traits for a more fulfilling life. However, this raises question on ethics, consent of the child and rights of parents. RAGHAV AHOOJA, addresses this issue with the lens of state involvement in controlling the private realm. E are at crossroads wherein we may be able to customize and design the futures of our future generations.

Lawmakers, thus, need to solve the ethical dilemmas brought about by such giant scientific leaps. Even though it may sound like science fiction, the future is here. Gene editing for therapeutic purposes (namely gene therapy) is being conducted for the removal of diseases in humans and foetuses both. When changes are made to the somatic cells, the modifications aren't hereditary. However, when the changes are made to the sperm, egg, or embryo, the modifications are transferred on to the next generation. It is done through a process called 'germline' gene editing. It seems like German philosopher Nietzsche's post-human concept of Übermensch (translated as beyond-man or superman) might become real. Using a technology known as CRISPR, one can not only treat diseases but also customize a baby in terms of intelligence, athleticism, and so on. This can permanently enhance the lineage of the family.

Law and Gene Editing Somatic gene editing has been approved in countries like the United States, although with restrictions. It is for the Courts and lawmakers to decide whether this right to 'enhance' children for their own welfare falls within the right to privacy of the parents, or whether the state has a right to curtail such an action.

According to American jurisprudence, there is a private realm of family life which the state cannot enter. Yet time and again the state has entered this realm, claiming a legitimate interest in regulating the family, especially for the welfare

of the child. Thus, whilst there exists a right to privacy under the Fourteenth Amendment, it is not absolute. In the famous case of *Roe v. Wade*, the United States Supreme Court held that the right to abortion is embedded in the right to privacy of the parent bearing the child. While the judgment was pro-choice, gene editing doesn't quite fit the bifurcated and antagonistic pro-choice v. pro-life debate.

It gives parents the choice to genetically edit their children, and the aim of such editing inter alia is to eradicate disease and enhance children for their own welfare. Germany, as opposed to the US, recognises the unborn as an individual with a "genetically determined" identity, which is unique and inseparable. According to German courts, as the unborn baby grows, it does not only develop into a human being but develops as a human being and is worthy of human dignity. Such human dignity would also include the right to live a dignified life, which is free of disease. Therefore, a blanket ban on gene editing would be violative of human dignity. It is quite clear that therapeutic gene editing is not violative of human dignity, insofar its aim is to eradicate disease. However, such human dignity also includes the right to free development of personality. A plain reading of the German constitutional text would suggest that non-therapeutic editing for personality factors is violative of human dignity. But to the contrary, heritable gene editing for purposes such as personality building will be permissible for strengthening the autonomy of the child.

Furthermore, it must be for the welfare of the child and must not restrict the free development of their personality. A thumb rule could be - whether the child would subsequently consent to such a modification. In India, guidelines permitting development of therapeutic gene editing products were introduced. Currently, heritable gene editing can only be done for purposes of experimentation and the embryo cannot have a life beyond 14 days. Thus, heritable gene editing is yet not fully permitted in India. However, there is scope as the Indian Supreme Court in *K.S. Puttaswamy* (2017) recognised that the right to privacy encompasses family affairs and childrearing. This would possibly entail the parents' right to enhance their child as an extension of their right to choose.

Child, State and Parents in Gene Editing It is an established position in law that technology mustn't be prohibited due to a mere possibility of harm. Rather, a positivist approach must be adopted so as to do the greatest good to the greatest number. In fact, a recent report by a German government-appointed council of experts stated that heritable gene editing is not violative of human dignity.

Further, a joint statement by the councils of the United Kingdom, France, and Germany stated that heritable gene editing is permissible. However, there must be a risk assessment and the risk must be brought down to a minimum acceptable level.

Thus, there is a tripartite relationship of the right of the parents to choose the genetic make-up of their children, the right of the state to regulate such an act, and the right of the unborn baby to consent to such editing. The American Supreme Court in *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* has reiterated that the matters involving the intimate choices of a person are central to dignity and autonomy protected under 'liberty' enshrined in the American Constitution. And that at the heart of this liberty lies the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life, without the interference of the state.

Where does that leave us? Ultra-modern technologies such as artificial wombs make one think whether a birth is really an event, or a 'process', and if so then where does the 'process' begin? Partial ectogenesis (the growth of a baby outside the womb) is already happening. But in time, we might be able to carry out full ectogenesis. As the reliability of such technologies increases, so does their capability. The potential to live outside the mother's womb as opposed to the usual 24 weeks would begin right from the stage of development of the foetus, which is at 8 weeks.

Further, with the help of biotech, the ability of an unborn baby to live outside the mother's womb might begin right at fertilisation. The American Courts have held that an individual whether single or married has the right to privacy which the state cannot infringe. Thus, even a single parent, out of wedlock, can bear such a child and the right to genetically edit unborn babies would be extended to them. The mother and father would be on an equal footing while deciding whether to genetically edit the baby or not.

SOCIO – CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

1. Study finds field of forensic anthropology lacks diversity

The field of forensic anthropology is a relatively homogenous discipline in terms of diversity (people of color, LGBTQ+ individuals, people with mental and physical disabilities, etc.) and this is highly problematic for the field of study and for most forensic anthropologists. At the core of the forensic sciences are basic sciences and the STEM fields, which have struggled with increasing diversity and inclusion.

The lack of diversity in the STEM fields and the forensic sciences is concerning because it can limit the types of questions being asked in research. "As forensic practitioners, we do not reflect the demographics of the highly dynamic populations that we serve across the country. Relevant and successful research relies on a diversity of ideas, perspectives and experiences, and without such diversity, the field stagnates and does not keep up with important issues that are relevant to society," explained corresponding author Sean Tallman, Ph.D., RPA, assistant professor of anatomy and neurobiology at Boston University School of Medicine (BUSM).

In order to explore the demographics of the forensic anthropological community and perceptions of diversity and inclusion, an anonymous survey was sent out to the Anthropology Section of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences (AAFS), which included more than 500 individuals. The survey consisted of 48 questions that asked about demographic information; whether participants believe that diversity exists in various educational contexts; their experience with diversity, inclusion, and harassment at the AAFS annual meetings; and what the field could do to increase diversity and inclusion.

The data then was analyzed for trends in order to propose actionable measures that could produce meaningful change that positively impacts diversity and inclusion in forensic anthropology. According to the researchers they found many forensic anthropologists had experienced or witnessed discriminatory behavior within the AAFS, which is the scientific society that most forensic practitioners maintain membership in the U.S. "Problematically, many individuals in forensic anthropology do not know how to report incidents of discrimination or harassment that occur at the AAFS," added Tallman.

While the discipline has been slow to address issues of diversity, inclusion and discrimination, Tallman believes the field can mitigate these issues through regular tracking of membership demographics by the AAFS, reassessing graduate admission requirements and indicators of success, creating mechanisms for reporting discrimination and harassment, targeted outreach, and developing mentorship opportunities.

"Striving for a culture of diversity through inclusion in forensic anthropology helps to reflect the greater populations that we serve and encourages us to challenge our own assumptions and inherent biases that can complicate the analysis of skeletal remains in forensic casework. Diversity and inclusion initiatives should be substantial and well-supported, rather than merely token gestures to increase the number of minorities or underrepresented groups."

2. Discrimination based on caste is pervasive in South Asian communities around the world - now Seattle has banned it



For now, this ordinance will help put the spotlight on this centuries-old system that denies equality to a substantive section of the population on the basis of an oppressive ideology. Seattle became the first city in the US to outlaw caste-based discrimination against immigrants from stigmatised groups in South Asia's traditional social hierarchy.

The ordinance, adding caste to Seattle's existing anti-discrimination policies, was proposed by Kshama Sawant, the only Indian American councilwoman in the city, which is home to an estimated 75,000 Indian Americans.

Sawant, herself from a privileged caste background, has been a vocal critic of the discriminatory caste system. Sawant said the ordinance – which was approved on February 21, 2023 – would help put an end to an “invisible and unaddressed” form of discrimination in Seattle. A year ago, in January 2022, the California State University, America's largest public higher education system, also added caste to its anti-discrimination policy, allowing students, staff and faculty across its 23 campuses to report caste bias and discrimination. Influential interest groups advocating for the Hindu community in the US have opposed the Seattle decision. The Coalition of Hindus in North America, a Hindu advocacy group, has called it “nothing but bigotry against the South Asian community by using racist, colonial tropes of caste.”

While the caste system is often conflated in Western media with the Hindu religion and India alone, that is far from the truth. As social scientists specialising in South Asian studies, we assert that the caste system neither is exclusive to the Hindu religion nor is it restricted to India and Indians.

Caste in South Asia

While the caste system originated in Hindu scriptures, it crystallised in its current form during British colonial rule and has stratified society in every South Asian religious community. In addition to India, it is present in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Bhutan.

Social, economic and political status in this pernicious system is tied to traditional occupations fixed by birth. Brahmins, for example, who were traditionally assigned priestly work, are at the top, and Dalits, relegated to the bottom, are forced into occupations that are considered abject in South Asia. These include janitorial work, maintaining sewage systems, skinning dead animals, and leather tanning. Strict rules of caste-based marriages maintain these boundaries firmly. Caste organises social life not only among Hindus but also in Muslim, Christian, Sikh and Buddhist communities in the region. It is an intergenerational system based on birth into a caste group. Caste identities stay even generations after someone converts out of Hinduism and into any of these faiths.

Among South Asian Christians, Anglo-Indians – of mixed descent from Indian and British parents – are parallel to Brahmins, who remain at the top of the hierarchy. Middle-level Hindu castes come next, followed by those from Indigenous backgrounds. Those who converted to Christianity from Dalit groups are placed at the bottom. In other words, the system remains unchanged. Muslims across the region are organised with the minority Ashraf communities at the top.

The Ashraf community claims noble status as the “original” Muslims in South Asia because of their descent from Central Asian, Iranian and Arab ethnic groups. The middle in this social hierarchy is composed of Ajlaf, considered to be “low-born” communities that converted from Hindu artisanal castes.

The group at the bottom includes converts from Dalit communities who are identified with the demeaning term Arzal, which means vile or vulgar. In the Sikh community, the powerful landowning caste, Jat-Sikhs, are at the top, followed by converts from Hindu trading communities in the middle and converts from lower-caste Hindu communities, Mazhabi Sikhs, at the bottom.

While Buddhism in India is close to being casteless, its dominant versions in Sri Lanka and Nepal have caste-based hierarchies.

Caste carries over after conversion

While many of the so-called lower-caste groups converted to escape their persecution in Hinduism, their new religions did not treat them as fully equal.

South Asian Christians, Muslims, Sikhs and Buddhists with Dalit family histories continue to face prejudice from their new co-religionists. They are excluded from or experience segregation at shared places of worship and sites of burial or cremation across all these regions.

Social scientists have shown that strict caste-based rules continue to regulate social organisation and everyday interactions. Intercaste marriages are rare: for example in India, they have stagnated at about five per cent of all marriages over the past several decades. When they take place, rule-breaking individuals risk violent retribution.

While urbanisation and education have normalised everyday interactions across caste groups in shared urban spaces, entertaining lower-caste individuals in upper-caste households is still taboo in many families. A 2014 survey found one

in every four Indians to be practicing untouchability, a dehumanising practice in which people from Dalit castes are not to be touched or allowed to come in contact with upper-caste individuals.

Untouchability was prohibited in India in 1950 when its egalitarian constitution came into force. However, homeownership is segregated by caste, and religion and caste discrimination is pervasive in the rental market, where residential associations use flimsy procedural excuses for keeping lower-caste individuals out. Lower castes are expected to defer to the higher status of upper castes, refrain from expressing themselves in shared spaces and avoid displaying material affluence.

They risk being punished by socioeconomic boycotts, which could include ostracizing the Dalits or keeping them out of employment. It may even include assault or murder. In Pakistan, anti-blasphemy laws are used as a pretext for caste violence against Dalits, many of whom have converted to Christianity.

Caste and life outcomes

Studies show that caste-based identity is a major determinant of overall success in South Asia. Upper-caste individuals have better literacy and greater representation in higher education. They tend to be wealthier and dominate private-sector employment, as well as entrepreneurship.

While affirmative action programmes initiated by the British and continued in independent India have made improvements in the educational levels of lower-caste groups, employment opportunities for them have been limited. Studies also demonstrate how caste identity affects nutrition and health through purchasing power and access to health services.

Most socioeconomic elites in South Asia, regardless of religion, are affiliated with upper-caste groups, and the vast majority of the poor come from lower-caste groups.

Caste in the diaspora

Scholars have documented similar discriminatory practices in the diaspora in the UK, Australia, Canada and the African continent.

Caste has started getting recognition as a discriminatory category, especially in the US, in recent years. A 2016 survey, "Caste in the USA," the first formal

documentation of caste discrimination within the US diaspora, found that caste discrimination is pervasive across workplaces, educational institutions, places of worship and even in romantic partnerships.

In 2020, the state of California sued Cisco Systems, a technology company in the Silicon Valley, on a complaint against caste-based discrimination. Harvard University, Colby College, University of California, Davis, and Brandeis University have recognised caste as a protected status and have included it in their nondiscrimination policies.

Seattle's new ordinance may trigger similar moves across other US cities where South Asian Americans from nonelite caste backgrounds are settling down and address caste-based discrimination among other South Asian faith communities as well. For now, this ordinance will help put the spotlight on this centuries-old system that denies equality to a substantive section of the population on the basis of an oppressive ideology.

3. In affidavit in SC, Centre defends exclusion of Dalit Christians, Dalit Muslims from scheduled castes' list

The Centre has defended the exclusion of Dalit Christians and Dalit Muslims from the list of scheduled castes, saying historical data shows no backwardness or oppression was ever faced by them

The Centre has defended the exclusion of Dalit Christians and Dalit Muslims from the list of scheduled castes, saying historical data shows no backwardness or oppression was ever faced by them.

Contending that Dalit Christians and Dalit Muslims cannot claim benefits which scheduled castes are entitled to, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment in an affidavit in the Supreme Court said the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order of 1950 does not suffer from any unconstitutionality.

The affidavit was filed in response to a plea of NGO Centre for Public Interest Litigation (CPIL) seeking extension of reservation and other benefits to people from Dalit communities who converted to Islam and Christianity.

The ministry also submitted that the identification of scheduled castes is centred around a specific social stigma that is limited to the communities identified in the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950.

The Constitution (Scheduled Caste) Order, 1950, "does not suffer from any unconstitutionality inasmuch as the exclusion of Christianity or Islam was due to the reason that the oppressive system of untouchability that leads to economic and social backwardness of some Hindu castes was not prevalent in Christian or Islamic societies", the affidavit said.

The Order "was based on historical data which clearly established that no such backwardness or oppression was ever faced by members of Christian or Islamic society", it said. "In fact, one of the reasons for which people from scheduled castes have been converting to religions like Islam or Christianity is so that they can come out of the oppressive system of untouchability which is not prevalent at all in Christianity or Islam," the affidavit said.

The ministry also refused to agree with the report of the Justice Ranganath Mishra Commission that recommended inclusion of Dalit Christians and Dalit Muslims in the scheduled castes list, and said it took a myopic view.

4. The Appalling Educational Status of Muslims in India Needs Urgent

Education is one of the most important instruments for the development and empowerment of any marginalized community. Education plays an important role in helping people in gaining a respectful and dignified life within the society and is also helpful for enabling people to find a source of employment and livelihood. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan was a great socio-religious reformer and messiah of 'Muslims education' and he said, "It is the categorical verdict of all the nations and great seers of the world that national progress depends on education and training of the people. Keep in

mind that life without education and training is like a bird without wings.

” Muslims are the second largest populous religious group after Hindus in the country. The National Minority Commission has identified Muslims as minorities along with Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and Jains on the basis of religion. Among the minorities, Muslims have the highest population with 14.2 percent, followed by Christianity 1.7 percent, Sikhism 0.7 percent, Buddhism 0.5 percent, Jainism 0.4 percent and others at 0.7 percent. There are many states such as Jammu and Kashmir, West Bengal, Assam, and others in which population of Muslims is above 20% (Censes, 2011). Muslims, despite being the largest religious minority of the country are lagging behind as compared to the other religious minorities on all indicators of human development, such as living standards, financial stability, political existence, education and other aspects, thereby showing poor performance in most fields. Their socio-economic status is far behind that of other minorities and is also less than the national level. The factors of their educational backwardness have not fully and satisfactorily been studied by scholars and other governmental and non-governmental agencies.

Invariably most individual researchers, organizational surveys and government appointed committees find that Muslims are the most educationally backward community of the country. In this regard, a high level committee was headed by the Prime Minister of India in 2006, popularly called the Sachar Committee. The Committee found that Muslims have low level access to educational opportunities and their educational quality is even lower or is as bad as the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Other Backward Classes (OBCs).

The report has also revealed that one fourth of Muslim children in the age group of 6-14 years have either never attended school or are dropouts. For children above the age of 17 years, the educational attainment of Muslims at matriculation is 17%, as against national average at 26%. Only 50% of Muslims who complete middle schools are likely to complete secondary education, compared to 62% at the national level' (Ministry of Education, GOI). Their literacy rate, mean year of education, representation in senior secondary education and higher education is below other communities in India. For example, the literacy rate among Muslims is 57.3%, which is far behind the national average of 74.4%. When we see other minority communities in India their literacy levels are far better than the Muslims.

The majority Hindus have a literacy rate of 63.6%. Literacy among other minority such as Jains is 86.4%, Among Christians it is 74.3%, Among Buddhists it is 71.8% and among Sikhs it is 67.5% in India. This shows that the Muslims have the highest illiteracy rate of any single religious community in India. Although the literacy rate for Muslim women was higher than SCs and STs women, but lower than others (Times of India, 2020). A study was conducted by S.M.I.A. Zaidi in 2006 and found that the highest literacy among Muslims was in Andaman and Nicobar Islands at 89.8%, followed by Kerala 89.4%, while lowest literacy was found in Haryana 40%, and Bihar 42%. In the major states of the country (i.e. Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Bihar, and Haryana etc.) Muslims are educationally the most backward in comparison with other religious communities.

As per National Sample Survey Report of the 75th Round (2018), reported

by the Times of India (2020) the Gross Attendance Ratio (GAR) of Muslims was lower (i.e., 100) than SCs (101), STs (102), OBCs, and minorities. The same case is also at upper primary level; here the GAR was lower than other communities. The GAR of Muslims at Secondary level was 71.9%, which was less than STs 79.8%, SCs 85.8% and from OBCs also. Similarly, in the case of higher secondary level and the GAR of Muslims was lowest i.e. 48.3%, below the SCs 52.8%, STs 60% and lowest compared to other communities as well. At the level higher secondary and above, their GAR has been 14.5%, just above the STs 14.4%, but below from the SCs 17.8% and other communities. In the age group of 3 to 35 years, among all communities, Muslims have the highest proportion that had never enrolled in formal educational institutions or programmes.

The enrolment of Muslims in higher education is pathological. As per All India Survey on Higher Education Reports (AISHE) (conducted by MHRD, GOI), it was revealed that the representation of the community in higher education was also the lowest compared to the communities such as SCs, STs and OBCs. From the above table, the growth rate of Muslims in higher education from the years 2010-11 to 2018-19 was 26.92%, while that of the STs was 20%, and that of the SCs was recorded at 25.50 %, and OBCs 23.96%. This clearly shows that, among all the minorities, Muslims have the highest growth rate, but in terms of proportion their enrolment is the lowest among these communities.

The importance of education and skill in the rise and fall of the communities is well known, and everyone also knows that in the present scenario (which is known as knowledge society) it is impossible to spend a self-dependent and

dignified life without an education. From the above discussion and evidences, and various reports, it shows that, in the matter of education, the condition of Muslims at all levels (i.e. primary, upper primary, secondary, senior secondary and higher education) of education remains pathetic in comparison with other religious group as well as among SCs, STs and OBCs group.

It is a serious constraint in planning for the education of Muslims. A large population of Muslims is not only poor, but also deprived of the legacy of education. It is very difficult to get education for those Muslims who earn their livelihood through hard work and small businesses.

There are only two ways for these poor and hard working class of Muslims to get education, either government schools and colleges or madarasas. For this reason, in my opinion, there is an urgent need for intellectuals and philanthropists to come together, generate awareness about the importance of education and make them aware of the educational schemes, policies and programmes run by the government of India. Looking at the pathetic state of education among the muslims in India, state governments along with the Centre, need to pay special attention towards the education of Indian Muslims.

PAPER - 2

INDIAN & TRIBAL ANTHROPOLOGY

1. With 'Naga political issue' unresolved, 'Frontier Nagaland' gains traction



Claiming that the six districts have been neglected for years, the Eastern Nagaland People's Organisation (ENPO) has been demanding a separate 'Frontier Nagaland' state, since 2010

As tribals in neighbouring Manipur are demanding for a separate state for themselves, the separate 'Frontier Nagaland' demand also another major burden for the state and Central government amidst the unresolved decades-old Naga political issue.

Claiming that the six districts have been neglected for years, the Eastern Nagaland People's Organisation (ENPO) has been demanding a separate 'Frontier Nagaland' state, since 2010. Seven backward tribes of eastern Nagaland -- Chang, Khiamniungan, Konyak, Phom, Tikhir, Sangtam, and Yimkhiung -- are spread across these six districts.

Tribals constitute around 87 per cent of the total two million populations in Christian-dominated Nagaland, inhabited by 17 major tribes along with other sub-tribes with each distinct in character from the other in terms of customs, language and attire. Off and on organising agitations, the ENPO, the apex tribal organisation of eastern Nagaland, and many other organisations to press its demand had boycotted the mega annual Hornbill festival last year.

The ENPO and its associated organisations, in support of its separate state demand, gave a call to boycott the February 27 Nagaland Assembly polls but subsequently withdrew the boycott call following the assurance from Union Home Minister Amit Shah. Shah had also met ENPO leaders number of accessions on the issue earlier. The Home Minister, before the Assembly polls, had said that all the issues of the ENPO have been discussed and an agreement would be signed after the elections.

However, after over five months, 'Frontier Nagaland' issue still remains in limbo.

Amidst the long-pending demand of a separate 'Frontier Nagaland' state, a consultative meeting on the Centre's proposal for constitution of an Autonomous Council for six eastern districts of Nagaland was held on June 30 in Kohima.

A Nagaland government official said that a consultative meeting, on the proposal of the Central government, was for an Autonomous Council for the six eastern districts -- Tuensang, Mon, Longleng, Kiphire, Shamator, and Noklak.

However, the outcome of the consultative meeting was not disclosed.

Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio, Deputy Chief Ministers, the Assembly Speaker, all the Ministers, the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha members of the state along with the Chief Secretary, several MLAs, and leaders of many tribal organisations were present in the meeting.

Responding to the ENPO's demand, the Union Home Ministry, earlier this year, formed a three-member committee headed by Ministry of Home Affairs Adviser, Northeast, A.K. Mishra and the panel visited Nagaland several times and talked with all concerned including the ENPO leaders. Regarding the demand of the ENPO for a separate state, the Chief Minister recently said that the state government has already recommended to the Centre for the formation of an autonomous region for the people belonging to the eastern region of the state.

Rio said that the state government would continue to keep the Naga political issue at the top of its agenda.

He said that the recognition of the unique history, culture and identity and Naga issue as political and the signing of the Framework Agreement and the Agreed

Position, the joint statement made on October 18, 2022 in Kolkata, and the signing of the 'Nagas are moving ahead' at the meeting at Chumoukedima in Kohima on January 14 are just some of the landmarks which the on-going dialogue has been successful in achieving.

Rio said the state government aims to take Nagaland towards 'A State of Excellence,' and that the citizens must strive to excel in their chosen fields and careers and in doing so, push 'Brand Nagaland' and popularise 'Naga soft power'.

2. Preserving Tribal Culture



The vision of inclusive growth and community-led development is not an idea but an actionable strategy for **Odisha in its 5T (transparency, technology, teamwork, time-limit, leading to transformation)**-driven development model.

Tribal population in India

- India comprises 8.6% tribal population, has access to an enormous indigenous knowledge, which through recognition, adoption, and mainstreaming has the potential to provide sustainable solutions.

- According to **article 342 of the Indian Constitution**, the President may with respect to any State or Union territory specify the tribes, tribal communities, parts of, or groups within tribes or tribal communities as **Scheduled Tribes in relation to that State or Union territory**.

Odisha's Special Development Councils (SDCs) initiative

- In a significant move towards preserving, promoting, and popularising tribal culture while also continuing with the development process, the Odisha government launched the **Special Development Councils (SDCs) initiative in 2017**.
- This is an active effort to preserve the **culture and heritage of 62 tribes** in the State under one umbrella while keeping economic development on course in the regions.
- The scheme, which covered **9 tribal-dominated districts and 60 lakh tribal households in 117 blocks**, has now been expanded to 23 districts covering more than 84 lakh tribal people.

About Tribal Cultures:

- **Communal living:** Many tribal communities in India have a strong emphasis on **communal living and sharing resources**.
 - They live in close-knit communities and often make decisions collectively.
- **Self-Sufficiency:** Tribe is a **synonym for a self-reliant community**, a tribe is a relatively closed society and its openness is inversely related to the **extent of its self-sufficient pursuits**.
- **Connection with nature:** Tribals have a strong connection with nature, with **traditional beliefs and practices** that revolve around the forests and animals.
- **Folk arts and crafts:** Tribals are known for their unique art forms, including **pottery, weaving, and jewellery making**.
- **Spiritual beliefs:** Tribals often have their own unique spiritual beliefs, which may involve the **worship of ancestors, nature spirits, or deities**.

Tribal Lifestyle and Sustainable development:

- **Respect for the natural environment:** Tribal traditional practices, such as using natural materials for **housing, food, and medicine, and living in harmony** with the cycles of nature.
- **Community-based decision-making:** Collective decision-making considers the needs of the community as a whole and ensures that decisions are made in a **sustainable and equitable manner**.
- **Promotion of biodiversity:** Tribals have developed practices to protect and promote diversity, which includes traditional methods of agriculture, such as **intercropping and seed saving, as well as the protection of sacred sites** that are important for the preservation of biodiversity.
- **Conservation of natural resources:** Sustainable practices involve limiting the use of resources to ensure their long-term availability, such as **rotational farming or allowing forests to regenerate before harvesting timber**.
- **Emphasis on intergenerational knowledge sharing:** Passing down knowledge to the next generation includes **traditional knowledge of the natural environment and sustainable practices for managing resources**.
- **Protection of water resources:** Tribal communities rely on water resources and have developed practices that can help to ensure that **water is available for future generations, and can reduce greenhouse gas emissions**.
- **Regenerative agriculture:** tribal communities have been practicing regenerative agriculture for centuries, which involves practices like **crop rotation, intercropping, and regenerating soils with organic matter**.
 - These practices help to sequester carbon in the soil, which can help to mitigate climate change.
- **Use of renewable energy:** They have traditionally used renewable energy sources like **wind, solar, and hydropower**, which can be expanded and modernized to provide clean energy for more people.

Challenges faced by tribals in performing their lifestyle

- **Discrimination:** Tribal communities often face discrimination and prejudice from the dominant society, including limited access to education, healthcare, and other basic services.
- **Land rights:** Tribal communities have been displaced from their traditional lands due to industrialization, and mining, which has resulted in the loss of cultural identity, and social and economic marginalization.

- **Climate change and environmental degradation:** Climate Change, such as changes in rainfall patterns, increased frequency of natural disasters, loss of biodiversity, deforestation, pollution, and loss of habitat, has negatively affected their traditional livelihoods and ways of life.
- **Socioeconomic marginalization:** Many tribal communities have limited access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities, which can result in poverty and social exclusion.
- **Lack of political representation:** Tribal communities often lack political representation and may not have a voice in decision-making processes that affect their lives.
- **Cultural assimilation:** Many tribal communities face pressure to assimilate into the dominant culture, which can lead to the loss of traditional knowledge, language, and cultural practices.

Government initiatives to conserve tribal culture:

- **National Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation (NSTFDC),** an apex Organization under the **Ministry of Tribal Affairs** in 2001 was brought into existence with the sole aim of economic upliftment of the Scheduled Tribes by way of extending concessional financial assistance to the target group under its various schemes.
- **TRIFED's Initiatives for Tribal Population:** The Government plans to establish **50,000 Van Dhan Vikas Kendras, 3000 Haat Bazaars, etc.**
- **Central Sector Scheme:** Institutional Support for Development & Marketing of Tribal Products / Produce.
- **Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Yojana:** It is a market-linked tribal entrepreneurship development program for forming clusters of tribal Self Help Groups (SHGs) and strengthening them into Tribal Producer Companies.
 - Scholarships for pre-matric, post-matric, and overseas education
 - Support to National Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation
- **Development of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs):** The scheme covers activities like housing, land distribution, land development, agricultural development, animal husbandry, construction of link roads, etc.
- **Vocational Training in Tribal Area:** The aim of the Scheme is to develop the skills of the ST youth for a variety of jobs as well as self-employment and to improve their socio-economic condition by enhancing their income.

- **Centrally Sponsored Scheme:** The mechanism for Marketing of Minor Forest Produce (MFP) through (MSP) and Development of a Value Chain for MFP' as a measure of social safety for MFP gatherers.

3. Dongrias of Niyamgiri are reviving indigenous seeds to cope with climate change



The Adivasi community had over the years gravitated toward rice monoculture, losing numerous landrace strains in the process.

The sun rose above the jagged spires of the Niyamgiri hills, the sky a wisp of apricot on rolling mounds of green. Trees bent with mangoes and jackfruits dropped manna for the occasional passerby. Around a dirt bend, a warm symphony drifted from a hill slope: the strike of a sickle, the pitter-patter of seeds, shuffling bangles of women unraveling weeds. It was sowing season for the Dongria Kondhs.

The Dongrias, one of the most vulnerable and traditional tribes of India, live in remote hamlets scattered throughout the Niyamgiri hill range in southern Orissa, a state in the country's eastern limb.

In the village of Rodango, not far from the hillside planters, 30-year-old Gatri Kadraka laid out a colourful array of seeds in her courtyard: three indigenous

varieties of finger millet, two varieties of foxtail millet, pearl millet, barnyard millet, little millet, an upland variety of paddy or rice, two local varieties of sorghum, maize, black gram, cowpeas, pigeon peas, castor beans, cucumber, pumpkin, gourd and spinach, and tubers of tapioca and forest turmeric.

“These are presents from Niyam Raja, the king of all mountain gods in Niyamgiri,” she said.

The Dongrias call themselves royal descendants of Niyam Raja, and their deep reverence for the natural resources that have been conferred on them perfuses their everyday lives.

“As long as we respect our hills, rivers and soil, he will keep us nourished,” she added.

As abundant as Kadraka’s collection is, the Dongria Kondhs once possessed many more varieties of heirloom seeds. But they started losing their self-sufficient food systems when the forest became degraded due to unrestrained logging and the government introduced subsidised high-yielding paddy in the late 1990s. From a diverse indigenous farming system, the Dongrias gravitated toward rice monoculture, losing numerous landrace strains in the process.

“Their mindset shifted from good old co-dependence on nature to productivity,” said Debeet Sarangi, founder of Living Farms, an Orissa-based nonprofit that works on food and resource management with indigenous communities. “They traditionally farmed for subsistence, but with rice came more mercenary concepts of ‘profit’ and ‘yield.’ They became reliant on commercial seed suppliers.”

The villagers’ consumption also shifted as rice cultivation gained hold and disrupted the nutrient-dense medley of traditional grains and legumes that once filled their food plates. Many communities began a slow descent into food insecurity.

However, with Orissa undergoing an agrarian crisis due to recurrent droughts and erratic rainfall that affect water-intensive crops such as rice, the Dongria Kondhs are on a mission to return to their farming roots. With a renewed sense of their rights to the forest after ousting a UK-based mining company in a much-

publicised resistance in 2013, and a little help from grassroots organisations such as Living Farms, the tribe began resuscitating lost seed varieties soon after. The Dongria women, through their elaborate cultural rituals, are leading this initiative.

A bejuni's prayer

High up in the village of Hundijali, every household has a different way of safeguarding seeds. Some women grind neem leaves and mix them with seeds as an insecticide; others line their baskets with cow dung as a disinfectant. They save the seeds from the previous harvest, some to be grown next season, some for consumption and what remains for barter within the community. If a household falls short of seeds, the rest of the families pitch in. If there is a marriage or celebration, the entire village contributes. The seeds belong to no one and everyone.

The community doesn't generally sell their seeds in the market unless there is a monetary or medical need. Instead, they sell indigenous crops that grow wild, such as jackfruit, bamboo shoots, oranges, honey, wildflowers and mangoes – gifts from Niyam Raja. Seed collection, cultivation and farming festivals revolve around three key players in every village community: the farmer, the senior village priestess or *bejuni*, and the messenger or *barik*.

Climate-resilient farming

The Dongrias plant mostly on hill slopes, an entire community working together in lines on one piece of land. They sow close to 50 varieties of seeds intermixed on a single farm: millets, grains, pulses, beans, oilseeds, tubers and vegetables. They plant from late April until the end of August, depending on the weather. Apart from certain vegetables like spinach, which they get throughout the season, they harvest crop by crop, from October until the end of February.

The tribe's practice of planting a wide variety of crops holds the key to a strengthened and climate-resilient food system. Although crops failed in large parts of Orissa in 2017 due to drought, pests, disease and untimely rainfall, Dongria Kondh farmers still brought home a decent harvest. While suicides were reported in other farming communities as a result of despair over crop losses, the Dongrias recorded no such deaths. "We have never had a situation where all our crops have failed," said 42-year-old Kalia Nonraka from Barmaguda village in the foothills of Niyamgiri. "Something or other will grow in less rainfall."

Food security and sustainability lessons

The revival of indigenous food systems also secures the nutritional well-being of the Dongria Kondh. Even though the farmers swear by the benefits of traditional crops, certain communities in the foothills and lower ranges of Niyamgiri have taken to government-subsidised rice for portions of their meals. However, the remote hamlets nestled deeper into the mountains still maintain more millets in their diets.

“Ragi [finger millet] gives us strength, rice just fills our stomachs,” said 18-year-old Laxmi Kadraka from Rodango village.

Lakshminarayan Pushty, a public health officer in the district of Rayagada, advocates old agricultural ways and eating habits for the remote tribe. “When they eat a mix of a variety of millets, vegetables and lentils, they get more fibre, protein, antioxidants and minerals such as magnesium and potassium, in comparison to only rice,” he said. “Just like their farms, good nutrition is all about how diverse their plate is.”

Waking up to the nutritional benefits and climate resiliency of the long-neglected millets, as well as to the needs of the indigenous small-scale farmers who cultivate these hardy crops, the Indian government has started promoting them under the National Food Security Act. Beneficiaries of the Public Distribution System, roughly 813 million citizens, would be able to get millets to eat at deeply subsidised prices of 1 to 3 rupees (1 to 4 US cents) per kilogram.

The Orissa state government has also taken up an ambitious five-year “millet mission” since 2016. The program aims to increase millet

consumption in 60,000 households across several districts by boosting production and setting up processing machinery. By producing millets to meet a larger demand, the project also aims at improving the economic security of the Dongria Kondhs. Village head Jakesika is keen to adopt the government’s initiative to boost cultivation of traditional millets, but is wary of disrupting old, indigenous practices. She emphasised that the soil’s health is paramount to the Dongria Kondhs.

4. Chhattisgarh tribal leaders warn against rushing into UCC, say hold talks first



“Our children go to schools where there are no teachers, other children go abroad to study. First bring some equality on these issues,” says Chhattisgarh Sarva Adivasi Samaj leader Arvind Netam.

Senior Chhattisgarh tribal leader and former Union minister Arvind Netam has cautioned the Central government against rushing through a Uniform Civil Code (UCC), saying it would be impossible to implement in tribal communities without proper consultation.

The 80-year-old is the president of the Chhattisgarh Sarva Adivasi Samaj, which claims to represent 42 tribal groups and over 70 lakh people in the state.

A UCC is also set to face opposition in Chhattisgarh from the Janta Congress Chhattisgarh-Jogi (JCC-J), which draws its support from tribals.

Addressing a press conference in Raipur Tuesday, Netam said: “All communities will be affected by a UCC. India is known for its diversity. The government of India should not rush into a UCC in tribal areas.”

Netam said the Chhattisgarh Sarva Adivasi Samaj would send a memorandum on the issue to President Droupadi Murmu, who is the first head of state of the country belonging to the tribal community.

“Tribals do not have a codified law. We have customary laws which are well-accepted within our community. It’s not that we do not want change... with time, customary laws change too. But we first want the Indian government to understand the tribal system and build confidence among them. Without consultation and dialogue, a UCC is impractical,” Netam, who was a minister at the Centre under Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, said.

The customary laws of tribal communities are accepted under Article 13(3)(a) of the Constitution. The tribals also enjoy special rights to land and property under the Fifth and Sixth Schedule of the Constitution and the Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, Netam said.

“For example, marriage, divorce, land rights, religious customs and several other community rules followed by the tribals will be unlawful if a UCC is implemented... I would say us tribals have the most advanced law when it comes to marriage. A tribal woman has a lot of liberty... She can walk out the day after getting married, she can get a divorce and marry multiple times,” Netam said.

On the argument of a UCC ensuring gender equality, Netam accepted that tribal women do not have a share in ancestral property but claimed that this meant conversely that the community does not see issues such as dowry. “We have heard of cases where tribals who have converted to Hinduism face the problem of dowry... But among tribals, the woman has no property to offer, so the question of dowry does not arise.”

Amit Jogi, who heads the JCC-J since the death of his father Ajit Jogi, the first Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh, said he was in agreement with Netam on the matter. “Babasaheb (Ambedkar) could have put UCC in fundamental rights (of the Constitution), but he decided consciously to put it in the Directive Principles of State Policy because he believed that unless and until there is unanimity among all people, there cannot be a UCC. In Chhattisgarh, what is required are dialogue and discussion with the tribals,” Amit Jogi said.

He added that the Narendra Modi government should not misuse its numbers. “Just because Mr Modi has a majority in the Lok Sabha, it does not mean they can push through anything, like they did with the farm laws.”

5. Is This Andaman Tribe in a Tourist Zoo? Time to Wake up and End This 'Safari'!



Imagine you wake up and start going about your normal day. Your better half prepares breakfast for your children, and you get dressed for the office. As you open the door to leave to work, you spot a bus packed with tourists parked right on the street where you live.

People are pointing at you from the bus, exclaiming excitedly. As your children emerge from the house to go to school, the tourists in the bus throw bananas at them. And as if all at once, the tourists start taking out cameras, with intrusive flashes - taking photos of your every move.

Would you feel violated and insecure? What if you were trying to go to work, and a bus stopped, and its occupants started making faces at you while throwing bits of food hoping you catch them. Would you feel like a lesser being?

The bus full of tourists, like the hundreds before it and the hundreds after it, represents the continuous breach of privacy of one of India's oldest indigenous people.

Every now and then, bus-loads of tourists descend upon the quiet Andaman island. Talking in animated voices, they have come for the chief attraction. "People of the jungle", the "wild tribes", and other exaggerated adjectives have been used by wily tour operators, to sell this chief attraction – sightings of the Jarawa tribe.

The tourists are instructed not to throw food or clothes at the tribals, or try and establish contact. But it is perfectly okay to point, first with fingers and then a camera. The tribals, who had been promised safety by the Government, are being sold as the chief attraction of a holiday package.

Genteel folks from urban jungles are surprised to see their hunter-gatherer counterparts. They are shocked at their often primitive ways. What these city folks don't understand, is that most of mankind descended from people who used these primitive ways. In fact, if anything, the tribes are closest to what man used to be like. Hunting and gathering, instead of sitting in an air-conditioned cabin.

But, of course, we are more civilised. Civilised enough, to hawk the island home of a tribal populace as a tourist attraction. And organise hundreds of buses and trucks to ply on the arterial road that goes straight through the Jarawa reserve.

Who are the Jarawa?

The tribe belongs to the Negrito group of tribal communities, including the Onge, the Great Andamanese and the Sentinelese living on the Andaman islands. Traditionally hunter-gatherers, they have lived and flourished in the rainforests of the islands for about 20,000 years.

However, they are fast disappearing. From a population of 5000, 150 years ago, they number just around 250-300. The total population of the Andaman and Nicobar islands is around four lakh. The disparity speaks for itself.

There has been tremendous pressure over the years on these tribes just to survive. The reasons are manifold and include deforestation which erodes their habitats and settlements. The equation between the Jarawas and the outside world has changed.

The indigenous people don't trust the mainstream. And why should they? It is the civilised man, responsible for the Andaman Grand Trunk Road-that rips straight through prime Jarawa territory. According to Samir Acharya of the Society for Andaman and Nicobar Ecology, closing the ATR would stop the interaction between Jarawas and settlers.

The Jarawas, like all indigenous people, are fiercely protective of their turf. From as early as the 1960s, they opposed the construction of the ATR, resorting to hostility and attacking workers. In 1976, work was temporarily stalled. However, it resumed soon, and the Jarawas paid the price.

Their thick forest became accessible to the outside world. Settlers increased in number, trees were being felled, and poaching rose considerably, threatening the delicate ecosystem of the tribe. The developmental authorities turned a deaf ear to the protests of environmentalists, anthropologists and the Jarawas themselves. Today, the road carries traffic right through the heart of the Jarawa reserve. Further cause for concern for them.

The biggest and most underrated risk that the tribal population faces from the outside world is disease. Contact with outsiders has brought disease to this otherwise insular community.

In 1990, when a measles epidemic hit, around 60% of them were infected. The ATR provides the outside world with an intimate experience in the Jarawa heartland. The food the tourists offer the Jarawas contains sugar, artificial preservatives and saturated fat-something their systems cannot adjust to.

This significant change in diet can alter their metabolism, exposing them to urban ailments like diabetes and heart ailments.

Settlers and tourists also come with a multitude of vices. Thanks to them, the Jarawas have been exposed to alcohol, gutkha and tobacco. This, amongst other things, has led to sexual exploitation of the indigenous population's women. A shocking video emerged, in which a policeman was instructing a group of tribal women to dance for his and the tourist's entertainment. The policeman commanded, and the girls obeyed. The video was met with rage around the world.

It was an avalanche of embarrassment that followed. The Indian Government promised to make amends and promised to protect the tribes from exploitation from the outside world-something that hasn't happened yet. Even today, at the

crack of dawn, buses and jeeps line up outside, preparing to enter the Jarawa reserve to get a glimpse of the tribe members.

The Jarawa are one of the earliest inhabitants of the beautiful Andaman Islands. Nomadic, they hunt what they eat and even collect fruits and tubers. They are hostile towards outsiders, with good reason. These people live off the land, leaving a zero carbon footprint, yet are regarded “primitive” and “exotic”, with tour operators bribing cops to take customers to meet the indigenous people.

The Jarawa belong to the island and are a vital part of the forest’s ecosystem. We are only recent invaders into their space. They’ve been around for ages.

Indigenous people are legitimate humans, with thoughts and feelings just like you and me. It is time to stop treating them like animals and maybe taking steps to ensure their identity remains preserved.

6. HIV test' on Madhya Pradesh tribal dancers sparks uproar



The HIV/AIDS tests of 10 women folk dancers were conducted with their "visible consent", and was in no way meant to doubt them, an official said. Women folk dancers were tested for HIV/AIDS by health department officials before they attended a fair at a temple for Goddess Sita in Madhya Pradesh's Ashoknagar district. The three-day event started yesterday.

The Rai folk dancers were checked for HIV/AIDS at a makeshift facility in the temple. The event is being held at the Karila Mata-Janaki Mata Temple, the location where devotees believe Goddess Sita gave birth to Luv and Kush.

According to the National AIDS Control Organisation, the three key rights for HIV/AIDS testing are right to informed consent, right to confidentiality, and right against discrimination.

Broadly explained, testing for HIV needs specific and informed consent of the person being tested and for any research and information sharing. In addition, a person has the right to keep information on HIV status confidential and can use a pseudonym. An HIV-positive person also has the right to be treated equally as per the fundamental rights covered under the law and the Constitution.

But the HIV/AIDS testing of the women folk dancers at the religious fair was filmed and photos were circulated on social media, drawing trolls who commented all kinds of things on them.

"It's not the first year that Rai folk dancers were tested for HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis-B. This was the second straight year that the tests have been conducted. The tests of the 10 women folk dancers which were conducted with their visible consent, and in no way meant we were doubting them," Ashoknagar chief medical officer Dr Neeraj Chhari said. "But to be on the safer side the tests were conducted," he added.

The Rai folk dance is performed by the Bedia community.

7. Paharis and Paddaris

The government has recently brought a Bill to include **4 communities** including **Paharis** and **Paddaris** in the list of **Scheduled Tribes (STs)** of **Jammu and Kashmir**.



The status of STs in Jammu and Kashmir:

- The Constitution (Jammu and Kashmir) Scheduled Tribes Order (Amendment) Bill, 2023 will include **4 communities** in the list of STs in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K).
- The communities are- "**Gadda Brahmin**", "**Koli**", "**Paddari Tribe**", and "**Pahari Ethnic Group**".
 - **Gadda Brahmins** and **Kolis** are very **small** communities.
 - **Gadda Brahmins** are a branch of the **Gaddis** whereas **Kolis** are a **sub-caste** of **Sippis**.
 - Both these communities are already in the ST list since **1991**.
- Other ST communities in J&K includes- the **Gujjars** and **Bakerwals**.

The Gujjar-Bakerwals of Jammu and Kashmir:

- The **Bakerwals** are **nomadic community** as they migrate with their **livestock** to the **higher** reaches in the **summer**, and **return** before the onset of **winter**.
- The **Gujjar-Bakerwal** are the **third** largest group after **Kashmiris** and **Dogras** in J&K.
- They were given ST status in **1991**, along with the **Gaddis** and **Sippis**.

The Pahari Ethnic Group:

- It includes people of **Kashmiri origin** who settled in the **districts** of **Rajouri** and **Poonch** district of J&K over a period of time.
 - Some of them also resides in **Himachal Pradesh** and **Pakistan** administered **Azad Kashmir**;
- The Paharis comprises of various **castes, creeds, sects** and **religions**.
- The Paharis includes **religions** such as **Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs**.
- They mainly speak **Pahari** language along with many other languages.
- They are divided into **Eastern Pahari**, Central Pahari, and Western Pahari, consisting of a number of different languages.
- There are **upper caste** Hindus among the Paharis and people who were displaced from **Pakistan Occupied Kashmir**.

Paddari Tribe:

- The Paddari Tribe resides in the remote **Paddar** area of the **hilly Kishtwar district** of J&K.
- The Paddari homeland borders **Zanskar** (Ladakh) in the **north** and the **east, Pangi** in **Himachal Pradesh** in the **south**, and the **rest** of J&K in the west.
- The Paddari comprises of **Hindus, Buddhists, and Muslims**.
- The people of the area include those who have come from **elsewhere** to settle there and speak the **Paddari language**.
- They do **not** constitute a **single ethic group**, but are a mix of individuals from **different castes** and **religions** who speak a **particular language**.

8. Kalbeliya Dance



Recently, an app called **chendavia** is gaining popularity among the students of kalbeliya dance.

- Kalbeliya dances are an expression of the Kalbelia community's traditional way of life.
 - It is associated with a **Rajasthani tribe of the same name.**
- It was included in the **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organizations (UNESCO) list of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) in 2010.**
 - **UNESCO's List of Intangible Cultural Heritage** is made up of those **intangible heritage elements** that help **demonstrate diversity of cultural heritage** and raise awareness about its importance.
 - It was **established in 2008** when the **Convention for Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage** came into effect.
- The dance form consists of **swirling; graceful movements that make this dance a treat to behold.**
 - The movements associated with the Kalbelia also make it **one of the most sensuous forms of folk dance in India.**
- It is generally performed for any joyous celebration and is considered to be an **integral part of the Kalbeliya culture.**
- Another unique aspect of the Kalbelia dance is that **it is only performed by women while the men play the instruments and provide the music.**

□ **Instruments & Dress:**

- Women in flowing **black skirts dance and swirl, replicating the movements of a serpent**, while men accompany them on the “**khanjari**” instrument and the "poongi", a woodwind instrument traditionally played to capture snakes.
 - The **dancers wear traditional tattoo designs, jewellery and garments** richly embroidered with small mirrors and silver thread.
- **Kalbeliya Songs:**
- They **disseminate mythological knowledge through stories**.
 - They also **demonstrate the poetic acumen of the Kalbeliya**, who are reputed to compose lyrics spontaneously and improvise songs during performances.
 - Transmitted from generation to generation, the **songs and dances form part of an oral tradition** for which no texts or training manuals exist.
- **Kalbeliya Tribe:**
- Kalbeliya tribe people **were once professional snake handlers**, today they **evoke their former occupation in music and dance** that is evolving in new and creative ways.
 - They **live a nomadic life and belong to the scheduled tribes**.
 - The largest number of the population of Kalbeliyas is in **Pali district, then Ajmer, Chittorgarh and Udaipur district (Rajasthan)**.

9. Why no disaggregated data on tribal populations, asks House panel



The Union government was criticized for not having data that was broken down by the country's tribal people's health status in a report submitted to the House by a parliamentary committee on women's empowerment. The study also recommended significant data gathering in this area.

What did the report by the parliamentary committee on Women's Empowerment portray?

- A report on women's empowerment was delivered in the House by a parliamentary committee.
- The Union government has come under fire for its lack of disaggregated data on the nation's tribal inhabitants' state of health.
- The intention was to provide the Tribal Affairs Ministry more flexibility in how to allocate funds for tribal welfare in the areas of health, education, nutrition, skill development, and subsistence.
- The report of the committee presented a worrying picture of the state of tribal women's health.
- Leprosy and sickle cell anaemia are two conditions that are more common in indigenous populations.
- The committee received a written note from the Health Ministry.
- It brought attention to the rise of genetic disorders in tribal communities, such as sickle cell disease and G-6 PD deficiency.

What is G6PD deficiency?

- **Genetic Basis:**
 - Mutations in the G6PD gene, which is found on the X chromosome, lead to G6PD deficiency, a genetic condition.
 - Males are more likely to be affected than females since it has an X-linked recessive pattern. If two mutant copies of the gene are inherited, females may be carriers of the gene or, in rare instances, show symptoms.
- **Enzyme Function:**
 - The pentose phosphate pathway, which is essential for generating cellular energy and preserving the proper ratio of antioxidants and oxidants in cells, contains the enzyme G6PD.
 - G6PD reduces nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide phosphate (NADP⁺) to NADPH while catalyzing the conversion of

glucose-6-phosphate to 6-phosphoglucono-lactone. For cells to be protected from oxidative damage, NADPH is necessary.

- **Role in Red Blood Cells:**

- Red blood cells (erythrocytes) have a high oxygen content and few repair mechanisms, making them particularly susceptible to oxidative stress.
- Red blood cells are kept supplied with NADPH by G6PD, which helps to combat oxidative stress and shields the cells from damage.

- **Hemolytic episodes can be brought on by several things, including:**

- Foods: Due to their oxidative propensity, fava beans (favism) might cause hemolysis when consumed.
- Medicines: Several medications, including certain antibiotics, sulfa medications, and antimalarials, can cause hemolysis.
- Increased oxidative stress and hemolytic events can both be brought on by infections.
- Chemicals: Naphthalene, which is a chemical compound present in mothballs, can cause hemolysis when exposed to it.

- **Mild to severe symptoms of G6PD deficiency include:**

- When hemolytic episodes occur, mild cases could go unrecognized or just slightly worsen anaemia.
- Due to the disintegration of red blood cells, severe cases can cause considerable anaemia, jaundice, weariness, and black urine.

- **Management:**

- Despite the lack of treatment, care focuses on preventing hemolytic episodes:
- Avoiding triggers: Patients are recommended to stay away from certain substances, drugs, and foods that are known to cause oxidative stress.
- Use of drugs with caution: To administer safe medications, doctors must be aware of a patient's G6PD status.

- Monitoring: It's crucial to follow up frequently and keep an eye on your haemoglobin levels.

What is sickle cell anaemia?

- **Genetic Mutation:**

- - Sickle cell anaemia is brought on by a mutation in the HBB gene, which codes for the production of haemoglobin, the oxygen-carrying protein in red blood cells.
 - Hemoglobin S (HbS), an aberrant haemoglobin, is produced as a result of the mutation.
 - An individual needs two copies of the defective gene (one from each parent) to have the condition because the mutation is inherited in an autosomal recessive manner.

- **Abnormal Red Blood Cells:**

- Hemoglobin S tends to produce insoluble fibres when it releases oxygen, giving abnormal red blood cells a sickle shape.
- Sickle cells are less flexible, sticky, and stretchy than typical red blood cells, which makes them more difficult to flow through blood arteries.

- **Anemia and Fatigue:**

- Sickle cells have a shorter life span than regular red blood cells, which causes chronic anaemia and fatigue.
- Anemia causes the blood's ability to carry oxygen to be diminished, which causes weakness, exhaustion, and pallor.

- **Organ Damage and Complications:**

- Blockages that reduce blood flow can harm several organs.
- The spleen can become initially enlarged and then gradually destroyed, resulting in functional asplenia (loss of normal spleen function), which is caused by the filtering and eliminating of old red blood cells.

- Complications from organ damage might include strokes, renal damage, and pulmonary hypertension (high blood pressure in the lungs).
- **Diagnosis:**
 - Blood tests, such as hemoglobin electrophoresis, which looks for unusual hemoglobin types, are used to confirm the diagnosis.
- **Treatment:**
 - Management is a form of treatment that tries to reduce symptoms, avoid complications, and enhance quality of life.
 - It's important to manage discomfort during crises, which frequently involves using analgesics (painkillers) and staying hydrated.
 - Transfusions of blood can boost oxygen supply and temporarily increase the amount of healthy red blood cells.
 - A drug called hydroxyurea can increase fetal haemoglobin synthesis, which lessens the frequency and severity of crises.
 - Potentially curative procedures like bone marrow or stem cell transplants are constrained by the dangers involved and the lack of available donors.

What are the possible ways in handling these challenges faced by the tribes?

- **Limited Healthcare Access:** Access to medical facilities, diagnostic procedures, and specialized treatment for managing these illnesses and their complications may be restricted in tribal communities.
- **Genetic counselling and education:** To ensure well-informed decisions and appropriate management, it is essential to raise awareness of these disorders, offer genetic counselling, and inform people about the dangers and preventive actions.
- **Community support:** Support networks and community-based interventions can be very helpful in enhancing health outcomes and fostering early detection given the possible frequency of these illnesses within tribal groups.
- **Research and Data:** To develop efficient healthcare plans and allocate resources, precise data on the prevalence and effects of various illnesses within tribal groups must be collected.

In conclusion, the research underscored the need for more thorough data collecting and policy planning for their welfare and emphasized the absence of information on tribal health conditions. It also expressed concerns about illnesses and anaemia among tribal women. The committee advocated for action to address these health issues in tribal populations and suggested strengthening the Tribal Affairs Ministry.

10. Malaiyali Tribe Evolution



- The Malaiyali tribe, scattered across Tamil Nadu's hilly regions, has undergone a remarkable transformation over two centuries.
- From their initial foraging lifestyle to settling atop the Yelagiri hill and constructing traditional clay huts, the tribe has transitioned into a more modern way of life.

- Amidst the evolving landscape, one old-fashioned hut remains as a testament to their history.

Malaiyali Tribe

- **Historical Settlement:** Over 200 Malaiyali tribespeople established a comprehensive system on Yelagiri hill with clay huts for shelter, storage, farming, and cattle.
- **Modern Evolution:** Today, only one antiquated hut endures, belonging to tribesman Govinthasamy, while the rest have given way to brick-and-mortar homes.
- **Malaiyali Tribe:** “Malai” means hill and “yali” means people, depicting the tribespeople who settled across Tamil Nadu’s hilly regions.

Significance of Red Clay

- **Integral Material:** Red clay played a pivotal role in building huts, burying the dead, and sustaining the tribe’s lifecycle from birth to death.
- **Unique Construction:** Huts were constructed with red clay on teak wood frames, embodying the tribe’s connection to nature.
- **Practicality and Value:** Despite its worn appearance, the hut holds immense value due to the scarcity and high cost of materials like teak wood.

Distinctive Hut Features

- **Roofing:** A 12-foot thatched roof made of dry bamboo leaves, waxed with cow dung to prevent leaks during monsoons.
- **Interior Space:** Deceptively small from outside, the hut accommodates eight people and an attic for storing household items.
- **Functional Evolution:** Originally meant for living, the hut transformed into a storage space for seeds during sowing and grains post-harvest.
- **Elevated Structure:** The hut stands on a teak wood stilt to prevent flooding during heavy rains and deter rodents.
- **Storage Space:** Stilts create additional storage beneath the house for grains or poultry.
- **Traditional Living:** The one-room structure housed various activities, highlighting the tribe’s reliance on agriculture.

11. 63 former IFS officers write to PM, allege misuse of Forest Rights Act

In the letter, also sent to Environment and Tribal Affairs ministers, the former officers claimed some states have illegally granted lakhs of acres of forestlands by exploiting FRA loopholes and ambiguous ministry guidelines.

“Some states have given titles to forest encroachers who occupied forest land after the cut off date of 13.12.2005 primarily on oral statement of village elders and by not taking into consideration most impartial and scientific evidence of satellite imageries showing status of forest occupation prior and after 2005,” the letter said.

“States started the implementation of FRA from 2008 in right earnest but simultaneously fresh encroachment of forest lands by unscrupulous elements got accelerated since the encroachers found a great option in the section 4(5) of FRA which mentions that the claimants cannot be evicted or removed from forest land till the process of forest rights recognition is complete.

People encroached overnight and immediately submitted a claim under FRA to the Gram Sabha making the forest department simply helpless in the matter. Apparently for political dividends, some politicians promised to regularize such encroachments especially before elections to local bodies and state assembly,” the letter said.

In recent years, the former officers alleged that authorities under FRA have exploited ambiguity and guidelines issued by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs. “Gram sabha meetings are conducted repeatedly mainly to give patta/titles to ineligible claimants and regularize encroachments made after 13.12.2005.

Surprisingly after 16 years of the Act, in some states ineligible claims extending over lakhs of acres of forest lands are being admitted in violation of FRA and Forest Conservation Act, 1980, and primarily on the strength of evidence of village elders while discarding satellite imageries and other public documents listed under Rule 13(1). This is causing gross injustice to the eligible tribals and forest dwellers and is damaging their future for all times to come since a huge number of ineligible but powerful people will continue using the resources

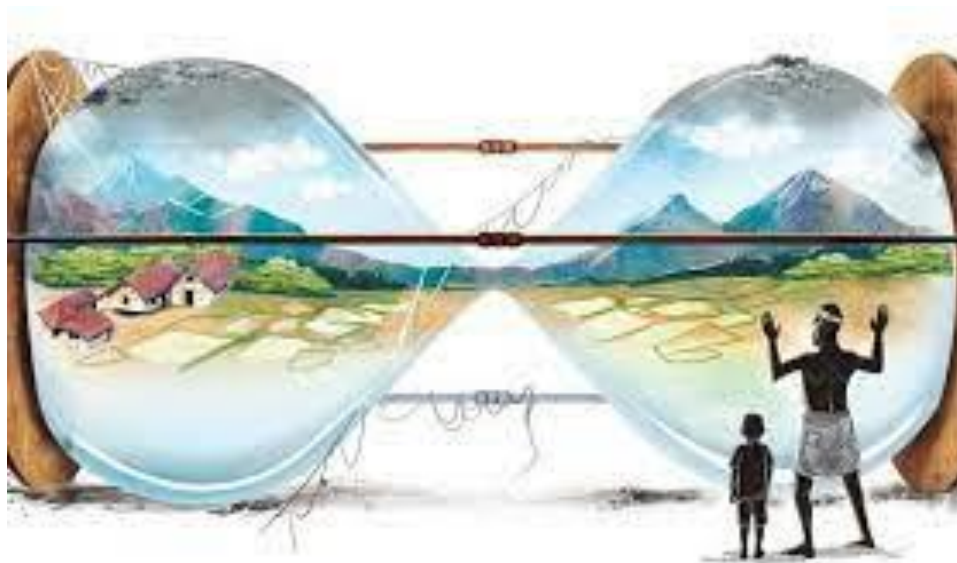
meant for the genuine beneficiaries under the Act," they stated in the letter.

State of Forest Report 2021 by Forest Survey of India has reported that there is a loss of 10,594 sq. km bamboo bearing area in the country between 2019 and 2021. "Additionally, in clear violation of sections 3(1)(i) and 4(3) of the Act, management rights are being granted to ineligible communities in all kinds of forest lands and even inside Tiger Reserve areas; some glaring examples being in Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra and Karnataka," the letter said.

They also mentioned that the illegal recognitions are akin to sponsoring encroachment of forest with the backing of powerful people. "In the process, the forests which are not only a source of their livelihoods but also provide life sustaining eco-services to one and all, are getting wiped out.

We request you to kindly take immediate cognizance of this extremely serious matter and kindly issue appropriate instructions to all concerned to ensure that FRA is implemented strictly, illegally granted rights are cancelled, and forest rights are vested only in the Forest Dwellers Scheduled Tribes and Other than Forest Dwellers and their communities and not in encroachers," the retired officers requested.

12. Over 16,000 hectares of tribal land diverted for 'development' in Gujarat



In the forest areas on which tribal claimed their first right, a total of 16,070.58 hectares of land has been diverted to various development purposes under the Forest Conservation Act 1980.

In Gujarat, out of 1,82,869 tribal claims for land pattas/rights under the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 57,054 claims have been denied by various administrations.

In the forest areas on which tribal claimed their first right, a total of 16,070.58 hectares of land has been diverted to various development purposes under the Forest Conservation Act 1980.

Under Compensatory Afforestation, 10,832.3 hectares of land has been given for forest. That shows a decrease of 5,238.28 hectares in land utilized for forest in Gujarat. On August 8, Congress MP Ameer Yagnik raised a question in the Rajya Sabha about tribal claims for land pattas/rights under the Forest Rights Act (FRA).

The government in its response said a total of 1,82,869 individual claims were received up to November 30, 2022, from the state, while 57,054 Individual claims were rejected up to that period. State Congress spokesperson, Parthiv Raj Kathwadia accused the government of depriving 91,183 tribals in the state of forest land rights.

TRIBALS LOSING LAND IN GUJARAT



Kathwadia said that it would mean that 49.8 per cent of tribals who applied for benefits under the Jungle Land Act were denied their right. There are 34,129 applications awaiting clearance. “The BJP makes huge announcements for tribals but when it comes to actually granting them their rights, the Bharatiya Janata Party government backs down,” Kathwadia alleged.

Giving reasons for rejection, the government stated in the Rajya Sabha that “general reasons of rejections of claims as reported by the state governments include non-occupation of forest land prior to December 13, 2005, multiple claims and the lack of sufficient documentary evidence.”

On August 7, 2023, Bharatiya Janata Party MP Varun Gandhi posed a series of questions in the Lok Sabha about the projects for which forest land was obtained from the Revenue and Forest Department under the Forest Conservation Act 1980. In response, the Minister of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change Department provided data for the entire country.

According to it, a total of 16,070.58 hectares of land have been diverted for various categories under Compensatory Afforestation (CA) in the last 15 years. The government has stated that, in comparison to the amount of forest land used, 10,832.3 hectares of land have been given under Compensatory Afforestation from 2008 to 2022-23, indicating that the government has used 16,070.58 hectares of land in Gujarat under the Forest Conservation Act 1980 for various development works in the last 15 years.

Tribals losing land in Gujarat

- 1,82,869 tribal claims for land rights
- 57,054 claims rejected by govt
- 5,238.28 hectares of decline in forestland utilization

13. Last survivors of Piripkura tribe found



- Deep within the Amazon rainforest, the story of Tamandua Piripkura unfolds, embodying the struggle of Indigenous people.
- This man is one of the last three survivors of the Piripkura people.

Who are the Piripkura?

- The Piripkura tribe is a small and isolated indigenous group in Brazil.
- They are known for their extreme isolation and limited contact with the outside world.
- They have intentionally avoided contact with mainstream society and have maintained their traditional way of life for generations.
- The Piripkura territory is located in the state of Mato Grosso, Brazil.
- Their land lies within the Amazon rainforest, an area that is rich in biodiversity and crucial for the ecological balance of the region.

Their dwindling population

- The Piripkura tribe is estimated to consist of only 3 individuals.
- Exact population figures are difficult to determine due to their isolation and the challenges associated with conducting a comprehensive census.
- They face numerous challenges to their survival, including threats from illegal logging, mining, and land encroachment.

About Piripkura Tribe:

- They are a nomadic tribe from the Mato **Grasso region of Brazil**.
- The tribe is known for its isolation and efforts to maintain its traditional way of life.
- These people have faced significant **challenges due to encroachment** on their land by illegal logging, mining, and other forms of land exploitation.
- Their territory has been under threat from **deforestation and resource extraction**.

Key Facts about Amazon Rainforest

- Amazon Rainforest is **large tropical rainforest** occupying the drainage basin of the Amazon River and its tributaries in northern South America and covering an area of 2,300,000 square miles
- It comprises about 40 per cent of Brazil's total area.
- It is bounded by the **Guiana Highlands to the north**, the **Andes Mountains to the west**, the Brazilian central plateau to the south, and the Atlantic Ocean to the east.

14. 'Generate category-wise health data for tribal female population', Parl panel tells Centre



These will suit the unique healthcare requirements of the tribal people, especially women and girl children, a Parliamentary panel has recommended in its report on 'Health facilities for tribal w

The union tribal affairs and health ministries should work in tandem to generate tribal dis-aggregated health data with separate classifications like girl children, adolescent girls, women of various age groups and women senior citizens to help in evolving custom made health interventions, a Parliamentary panel in its report suggested.

These will suit the unique healthcare requirements of the tribal people, especially tribal women and girl children, a Parliamentary panel on empowerment of women has recommended this in its report on "Health facilities for tribal women".

This report was presented in Parliament last week.

The committee further felt that community influencer groups and tribal leaders must also be engaged to instill behavioural changes among the tribal community for better health and nutrition outcomes.

Though many of government programmes are focussing on this approach currently, the committee urged upon the government to reinforce this approach for maximising the impact of such campaigns among the tribal community so that desired results are achieved.

It urged upon the tribal affairs ministry to make use of 'Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana' (PMGSY) in coordination with the rural development ministry for building all weather roads in tribal areas so that the tribal population including pregnant women can access healthcare facilities in time.

The committee also recommended that all habitations with a population of 250 in hilly and tribal areas should be covered under PMGSY and all weather roads should be made to improve connectivity in such rural areas.

The Parliamentary panel recommended that the government should take measures to make the tribal population aware about the importance of getting treated for TB and the need for undergoing the full course of treatment for effective controlling of the disease.

It further recommended that the provisions under Ayushman Bharat initiative should reach every person living with leprosy disease, especially among the tribals and let Ayushman Bharat be a true beginning.

"The committee hoped to see a day when leprosy is completely eliminated from amongst the tribal population," it said in the report.

The Tribal Affairs Ministry should focus on educating women and their respective husbands about the proper use and benefits of modern contraceptives, the panel said.

It also recommended to the ministry to organise special drives to promote male contraceptives among tribal men and to burst the myths around male contraception so that family planning responsibility is shared between husband and wife.

The committee further noted that in the absence of any effective treatment for SCD (Sickle Cell Disease), the disease burden can only be reduced with appropriate state-of-the-art diagnostics and intervention strategies which are primarily dependent on reliable data and hence it recommended that the Centre should complete the screening of all tribals for SCD from newborn to the old, with emphasis on the adolescents and antenatal women in a time bound manner so that the next generation of the tribal people are free from this disease.

15. Nehru's Word: We need to create a bond of affection with the tribals

"We had political integration of the states. But that is not enough. We must have something more intimate than political integration"

More than three months have passed since Manipur erupted in violence that involves unchecked use of sophisticated weapons. The neighbouring Mizoram is also affected and there is grave danger of the crisis spreading to other areas in a very sensitive border zone. Jawaharlal Nehru had warned many years ago that the North-East in general, and the tribal groups in particular, require very delicate handling with due respect to their culture and traditions. This is the second part of a speech PM Nehru made at the opening session of the Conference on Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Areas held in New Delhi on 7 June 1952 in which he set out the approach to be followed.

When I look at the progress of what is called modern civilisation in India, I see many good things. [But] I also see lack of many good things, and some of the things it lacks here, I find in the tribal folk – this spirit of song and dance and an appreciation of life, of enjoying life. I want, therefore, if you or I or others go there and meet these people, it is necessary for us to go there to learn and to imbibe something of the spirit pervading those places and not go there with long faces and black gowns and try to kill that spirit among those people.

We have had, for half a century or more, a movement, a struggle for freedom in this country culminating in our achieving Independence. The struggle itself, apart from the result of it, has a liberating tendency... We must remember that this experience, which millions of Indian people had, did not extend to the tribal areas.

It may – and it did – affect somewhat the tribes in the central parts of India undoubtedly, not so intimately perhaps, but somewhat they saw it. But if you go to the frontier areas, say, of Assam, it did not affect it at all...

We were not allowed to go in those old days by the old British authorities, so that our freedom movement did not reach those people. Rumours of it reached them and sometimes they reacted rightly or wrongly for the moment. About 21 years ago, there was that incident in the tribal areas of Assam, of a lady, Rani Gaidilieu, who, hearing stories of that great movement in 1930, here in India and of Gandhiji's name, became some kind of a leader...

Anyhow, the essence of the struggle for freedom, which meant raising some kind of a liberating force in India, did not reach those areas, chiefly the frontier areas, which are the most important tribal areas. The result was that while we had been

psychologically prepared during the last 30, 40, 50 years for various changes in India, those frontier areas did not get so prepared...

I am pointing these out to you to show how in tackling this problem we have to consider very important factors. It is not a question of so many schools and so many dispensaries and hospitals. Of course, they want schools and hospitals and dispensaries and roads and all that. But that is rather a mundane way of looking at things.

What we ought to be after is not merely to put up a building here and a building there, but to develop the sense of oneness with these people, that sense of unity, the understanding that would even deter me from referring to our relationship with the tribal people as 'we' and 'they' as that itself is wrong. It shows a feeling of separateness existing between us.



Jawaharlal Nehru in Manipur during a tour of the North-East amid tribal unrest, April 1953

And there comes the psychological approach. You may talk in this conference day after day about the development programmes regarding schools and other matters, but you will fail completely if you do not touch the core of the problem, that is, how to understand these people and make them understand you and to create a bond of affection and understanding with them.

Sometimes people talk of integration and consolidation of these people. I think the basic problem of India today, taken as a whole, is one of integration and consolidation. We had political integration of the states. But that is not enough.

We have to have something much more intimate than political integration and that process takes time. It is not a matter of law, it grows. You cannot force that thing to grow as you cannot force a plant or a flower to grow. You can only nurture it and produce conditions when it grows.

So, the greatest problem today of India is a psychological integration and consolidation—the building up of a unity which will do away with provincialism and communalism and various other isms which disrupt and separate. Having said that, I should like to say that this talk of integration and consolidation of the tribal people is very largely wrong. It is a wrong approach. It is a wrong approach both practically and psychologically.

If your approach is to win them by your affection, to go to them as a liberating force, to go to them as friends so that they may feel you have not come to take away something from them but to give them something, that is the right integration.

But if they feel that you have come to impose yourself, to interfere, to come in their way, to try to change their methods of living, to take away their land, to push some of your businessmen there who will exploit them, then it is all wrong, completely wrong.

Therefore, the less talk we have of this type of integration and consolidation of the tribal areas, the better. That integration will come when the tribal people come to you, wanting you, not by your going to them and bringing them in by the scruff of the neck.

We have to be doubly careful in appointing officers in tribal areas, because the officer in the tribal area is not merely a man who has passed an examination or who has gained some experience of routine work, but he must be a man or a woman whose mind understands, whose mind, and even more so whose heart

understands this problem, who is an enthusiast in this business, who does not go there to just sit in an office for a few hours a day and for the rest curse his luck at being sent to an out of the way place...

This is important because the man who goes there as an officer must be prepared to share his life with the people of the tribe, the tribal folk. He must be prepared to enter their huts, talk to them, eat with them and smoke with them, if necessary, whatever it is – to live their life, not to consider himself as something superior or apart, and thereby gain their confidence in this way and then advise them...

[Hence] our approach should be a psychological approach which always seeks to win their affection, and you can only win any person's affection or any people's by giving affection.

16. As many as 189 tribal colonies in Kerala still lack Internet access



Even though Kerala was the first State in the nation to recognize the right to the Internet as a fundamental right, the State still lacks mobile and Internet service in 189 Adivasi ooru (tribal colonies) scattered over 12 districts.

Over 5,000 indigenous students in these colonies have their chances harmed by the absence of access.

Background of this issue

- Even though Kerala was the first State in the nation to recognize the right to the Internet as a fundamental right, the State still lacks mobile and Internet service in 189 Adivasi ooru (tribal colonies) scattered over 12 districts.
- Over 5,000 indigenous students in these colonies have their chances harmed by the absence of access.

What is the status of the Tribals who did not receive the fundamental right to the Internet as promised?

- In Kerala, there are 189 Adivasi ooru (tribal colonies) dispersed over 12 districts that don't have access to the Internet or mobile service.
- The most detached tribal colonies are in Idukki, where there are 75 of them and more than 2,000 tribal pupils. Kannur is next with 1,140 kids.

What are the initiatives taken by the government to provide internet access to tribes?

- To deal with this problem, the Scheduled Tribes Development Department has made the first move by following the guidelines of the Forest Rights Act and requesting approval from the Forest Department to erect communication towers inside tribal communities that are situated within forests.
- A project that has received approval from the Union Cabinet includes a plan to offer Internet and mobile connectivity in these tribal colonies. In remote and underserved locations, the project intends to provide 4G mobile services.
- The KFON project was started by the Left Democratic Front (LDF) government in Kerala as a sign of its dedication to digital inclusion and lowering the cost of Internet access.

KFON Project

- Launched in 2019, the **Kerala Fibre Optic Network (KFON)** initiative seeks to offer inexpensive connections to the general public and free Internet access to families living below the poverty line.

- The importance of connectivity is emphasized by the Kerala High Court's recognition of the right to Internet access as a component of the fundamental rights to privacy and education.

Why is it significant to have internet connectivity for the tribes?

- **Access to Knowledge:** The Internet offers access to a huge collection of knowledge, information, and educational materials. Tribal students have access to internet research, and instructional, and learning platforms that may not be accessible locally.
- **Enhanced Educational Opportunities:** Connectivity enables tribal students to take part in online courses, webinars, and virtual classes, enhancing their access to higher education beyond what is offered in their surrounding area.
- **Digital Literacy and Skills:** Digital literacy and skills are becoming more and more important in today's society, and Internet exposure helps tribal people acquire these abilities. These abilities may result in more favourable employment and financial chances.
- **Health Information:** Especially when medical facilities are far away, tribes may find it easier to obtain healthcare resources and information if they have Internet access to medical information and telehealth services.
- **Communication and Networking:** Communication and networking are made possible by connectivity, which enables tribal tribes to interact both internally and externally. This makes networking, experience sharing, and establishing relationships for teamwork easier.

What are the Environmental effects of setting up towers in Forest areas?

- **Habitat Fragmentation:** The installation of towers may necessitate the clearance or modification of portions of the forest, resulting in the disturbance of the habitat. This may affect the movement of wildlife and hasten habitat decline.
- **Impact on Biodiversity:** A wide variety of plant and animal species can be found in forests. A decrease in biodiversity may result from disturbances caused by tower installation that influence the local flora and animals.
- **Ecosystem Services:** Forests offer a range of ecosystem services, including the filtration of water, the storage of carbon, and the control of the climate. The building of towers might obstruct these services and throw off the equilibrium of the environment as a whole.

- **Deforestation and Degradation:** The clearing of land for the installation of towers may cause localized deforestation or forest degradation, which will have long-term detrimental effects on the ecosystem.
- **Wildlife Disturbance:** Tower construction and operation may disturb the behaviour, breeding cycles, and nesting locations of wildlife. The populations of wildlife may be badly impacted by noise, vibrations, and human activity.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Kerala's initiatives to give tribal colonies Internet access demonstrate the state's dedication to closing the digital divide and fostering digital inclusion. The KFON project, the proposed communication tower initiative, and the legislative acknowledgement of Internet rights could all have a big positive impact on tribal people' and students' lives.

17. Vishwadeep Trust works tirelessly to bring clean energy in hilly terrains of Ladakh



The NGO, Vishwadeep Trust has a vision for empowering women farmers and tribal communities to fully take ownership of everything that has been given to them especially in the time of pandemic

With my experience having worked in hilly regions of Ladakh, I have often witnessed that last mile distribution of any kind of technology or even field testing and training when it is done free of cost, is seldom utilized fully by the communities because they start perceiving it as a token or a charitable initiative.

A non governmental organisation- Vishwadeep Trust has a vision of empowering women farmers and tribal communities to fully take ownership of everything that has been given to them especially in the time of pandemic. Time and again, Ladakh faces flash floods and several other crises that are often not talked about in the media. It is important that these aspects, specially regarding community engagement via contribution, via learning, via development of self help groups are also highlighted.

In 2017, The Vishwadeep Trust initiative received a global environment facility small grant programme under UNDP OP5 cycle. Although it was a small a grant of USD 50,000, the Trust impacted each and every household in Takmachik.

- There were two major technologies to be given to women farmers- Portable low cost indigenous solar cookers and solar dryers because that would greatly reduce indoor air pollution and reduce drudgery of women farmers in mountain region. The solar cooker boxes were distributed among women completely free of cost to reduce their drudgery and economic load.
- Upon monitoring in 2018, it was found that only 30 to 40% of population was making the judicious use of solar cookers. And that made us think twice. It was not an easy task to distribute 70 solar cook boxes in remote region of Sham valley that is Takmachik and then to collect family members of all the houses and train them about the uses and benefits of the solar cookers in both Ladakhi language and Hindi.
- The trust made a constant and consistent effort to instill a sense of ownership without charging them any money. It was a pleasant surprise to find out that out of the 40% of the people who were using solar cooker, 22% turned it into a mini local enterprise and started providing solar cooked organic bread and biscuits to nearby cafes and resorts. However, in some households it was found that the solar cookers were used like a little suitcase or they started putting different items in the cook boxes.

It was then decided that there will be a small fee or a community contribution attached to any purchase that crosses above 1000 rupees to any household.

This made a huge change in the outlook of the people.

Not only the solar dryers were a big hit in the region but there were repeat orders of solar dryers in the coming years not only from the same village but also from the adjacent villages.

Global Environment Facility (GEF) always stresses on projects sustainability and ownership amongst community hence they really instill and focus on co-financing. And the experience with Vishwadeep Trust also reaffirms that community contribution is definitely a boon.

There is always some negative stereotyping that NGOs make money or That the woman who runs this organisation is an outsider, but the local community always showed trust in the organisation and therefore they repeatedly order dryers, cookers and other things.

The community contribution towards technology specially for post harvest management guarantees project sustenance and guarantees a sense of ownership within the community and overall upliftment of women farmers and tribals. But there should be no added pressure on the organisation or community. Vishwadeep Turst had conducted a small pilot for the dryers and they were a success in the region, with repeat orders, the Trust also reiterated that contribution is a must.

The community was happy to contribute as the innovation has positively impacted their agriculture related practices.

Recently, the Trust noticed how women in Ladakh were burdened with physical drudgery due to the extra burden after COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns. They were relieved when they received the relief kits in the month of June for COVID-19.

Civil society actually faces many unspoken struggles even while implementing government projects. The NGOs continued to look for alternatives like conducting virtual trainings during the Covid pandemic but they are not as impactful as physical trainings. Nevertheless, the trust which local communities put in the NGOs and the way they gradually are moving towards

environmentally sustainable and healthy means of living make the hard-work and all the efforts worthwhile.

18. IFR review: Here are some possible repercussions of rejecting reviewed forest right claims

Some 1.688 million people, whose claims have been re-rejected, face threat of eviction and food security

The Supreme Court of India (SC), in a matter pertaining to the constitutionality of the Forest Rights Act, 2006 (FRA), directed the states on February 13, 2019, to evict those FRA claimants whose Individual Forest Rights (IFR) claims were rejected.

With around 0.54 million claims rejected after the review process in 14 states by 2020, the fate of the individuals from Scheduled Tribes (ST) and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (OTFD) hangs in the balance.

While the order was passed for 1.1 million people in 20 states in 2019, the number of rejected IFR claims has risen to 1,688,496 by November, 2022.

Will these 1.688 million people be evicted from their ancestral lands?

While the Supreme Court can give orders to evict people whose claims have been rejected, FRA or The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 talks about giving the titles to the STs and OTFDs. The Act doesn't talk about the eviction of individuals if the claims have been rejected; hence the order will only dilute FRA, said Y Giri Rao, executive director of Vasundhara, an NGO working on FRA in Odisha.

If worst comes to worst, these claimants can continue living there and the department that owns the land – forest or revenue – can file cases against them and move to the court stating that these individuals are encroaching upon their land under the Orissa Prevention of Land Encroachment (Amendment) Act or Odisha Forest Act.

“Once they move to the court, the individuals will have another chance to prove that they have been occupying the land for generations. There are similar laws regarding encroachment of land in all states which can be used for the claimant's advantage,” said Rao.

But how many of these people will have the resources or the knowledge to challenge the SC's order still remains a big question.

Along with eviction, food security will become a big issue if the claimants are evicted from their ancestral land.

"These communities depend on the forest for their survival. They cultivate small patches of land for personal use and depend on minor-forest produce for nutrition," said Rao.

If the forest department decides to do afforestation, these landowners will have no land and will have to migrate out of their traditional forests. The SC's order has diluted the FRA, he added.

CR Bijoy, an independent expert on FRA, based in Coimbatore, said if the review process is not done in accordance with the FRA guidelines, as the Ministry of Tribal Affairs had submitted before the SC, it will amount to an offence under section 7 of the FRA and contempt of court.

Section 7 of the FRA states that when any authority, committee, their officers or members contravene any provision or rule of the FRA concerning the recognition of forest rights, action can be taken against them for the same. They can even be fined.

"While submitting the number of finally rejected claims, the state government will also have to mention the procedure that was followed to review rejected claims," said Bijoy.

The review process begins at the Gram Sabha, as per FRA and if the state government says that this was followed when it actually didn't happen on the ground, the other parties will have to challenge this and they can talk about procedural flaws.

The SC judges will ask the state government to respond to it and the process will get delayed further, he said.

Bijoy added that if the state governments tell the SC that however many claims have been reviewed and finally rejected, the SC can ask for the eviction of these people. But for this, the states will have to find out the number of people who will face eviction after examining the cases individually.

“As per the legal definition of evacuation, it means that they are removed from the land they have occupied. They can only be physically removed from the place if they are physically present there,” said Bijoy.

The states will have to submit before the SC the number of IFR claims finally rejected and the actual number of cases where eviction will happen after examining these claims on a case-to-case basis, he added.