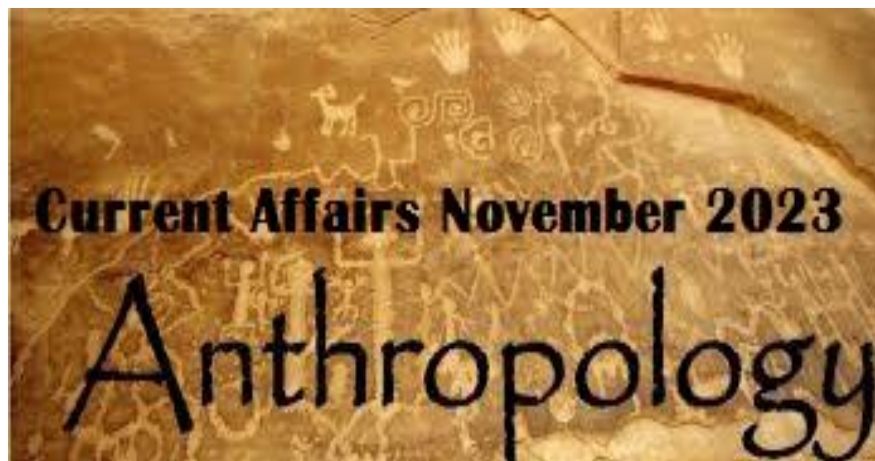


**ANTHROPOLOGY CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE
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PAPER -1

PHYSICAL & ARCHAEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

1. What was Neanderthals family life like DNA grants a glimpse



DNA from 11 individuals who lived in Chagyrskaya cave around 51,000 years ago suggests women moved between groups and also shows a high level of inbreeding

Ancient DNA from a group of Neanderthals who lived together has given us an unprecedented glimpse of the social structure of these extinct human relatives. Among other things, it suggests that their women moved between groups while the men stayed put.

Researchers have previously tried to work out what the social structure of Neanderthal groups was like from evidence such as the layout of caves and footprints, says team member Benjamin Peter at the Max Planck Institute

for Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig, Germany, but the DNA provides direct evidence. "It's the first time we've been able to do something like this using genetics," says Peter.

They did this by computing a value called **DNA divergence**.

DNA Divergence

□ **DNA divergence** compares nuclear genomes by choosing sections of their DNA at random and checking if, for each chosen section, the two genomes match.

□ The more similar the DNA sequences are, the more closely, it can be presumed, the two individuals are related.

□ Applying this approach to the **Chagyrskaya** remains revealed a father, his daughter and a close maternal relative who probably shared a grandmother with the father.

□ Separately, it matched a young boy to an adult female relative, potentially a cousin, aunt or grandmother.

They provide a rare glimpse into the close-knit family structure of a Neanderthal community eking out an existence on the eastern frontier of their geographic range, close to the time when their species finally died out.

2. A comparison between genomes of a Neanderthal in Siberia, and modern humans in Africa



A comparison between genomes of a **Neanderthal in Siberia**, and **modern humans in Africa** recently revealed insight into their migratory and interbreeding history.

Key Findings of the comparison:

- A Neanderthal who lived **120,000 years ago in Siberia** with those from modern humans in **sub-Saharan Africa** highlighted the **migratory and interbreeding** history of both species.

- **Interbreeding Timeline:** Neanderthals and anatomically modern humans initially interbred around 250,000 years ago, much earlier than the previously estimated 75,000 years ago.
- **Genetic Footprint:** A group of Homo sapiens from Africa interbred with Neanderthals in Eurasia during that period, which left a genetic footprint in the DNA of Neanderthals.
 - Approximately **6% of a Neanderthal's genome** found in Siberia contains **human DNA**.
- **Sub-Saharan Populations:** Some sub-Saharan populations of modern humans inherited Neanderthal DNA when interbred groups of humans migrated back into Africa.
- **Non-Coding Regions:** Most of the human DNA found in the Neanderthal genome was in non-coding regions, suggesting that human genes were selected against during Neanderthal evolution.

Significance of the study:

- Neanderthal DNA in modern human genomes and vice versa can **predict more accurately the impacts on interbreeding** to the physical characteristics of both groups.
- The **migration patterns and interactions** between modern humans and Neanderthals gives insight on human evolution.
- It can open doors for **future research** like exploration of genome of the population, but it is **limited mainly with Niger-Congo-related** ancestry.

About Neanderthals:

- Also known as *Homo neanderthalensis*, they were an **extinct species of archaic humans**, named in 1864 after the **Neander Valley in Germany**.
- They lived in **Europe, southwest and Central Asia**, from about 400,000 to 40,000 years ago and the **first humans to survive a cold glacial ecosystem**.
- **Appearance:**

- A long, low **skull** (compared to more globular skull of modern humans) with a characteristic prominent **double-arched brow ridge** above their eyes.
- Central part of the **face protruded** forward with a wide nose, may be an adaptation to living in colder, drier environments.
- Their **front teeth** were large, and **lacked a well-developed chin**.
- **Special ability:** Neanderthals were **skilled tool makers**, as evidenced by excavated objects such as **spears and flint handaxes**.
- They developed an innovative stone technology called **Levallois technique** to make **pre-shaped stone cores** that could be finessed into a finished tool at a later time.
- **Diet:** meat, plants and fungi, shellfish etc.

SOCIO – CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

1. Bihar caste survey: SC dismisses plea challenging classification of transgender persons as a caste



The petition argued that such classification has led to discrimination and

deprived transgender individuals of their right to self-identify their gender. The Supreme Court on Monday refused to entertain a plea challenging the decision of the Bihar government to classify the transgender community as a 'caste' and not under the category of 'gender' in the state caste survey process.

A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and SVN Bhatti dismissed the petition as withdrawn and granted liberty to the petitioners to approach the state government. The bench verbally stated that social benefits could be extended to transgender persons as a 'third gender' and not as a 'caste' after noting that there exist three columns in the survey form now – male, female and transgender. The plea contended that the state government categorised *hijra*, *kinnar*, *kothi*, transgender (third gender) as a separate caste code at serial no 22 under the Caste Code List, not classifying them under the category of gender.

The special leave petition, filed through advocate Tanya Shree, said Patna High Court earlier disposed of the writ petition without taking into account the fact that classification of transgender persons under the category of caste and not gender is violative of articles 14, 15, 16 and 21 of the Constitution, as well as Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019.

The petition stated that the "erroneous" classification of the transgender community as caste in the Bihar Caste Census, 2022 has resulted in discrimination against the community as it has taken away the right of self-classification of their gender.

"Such classification of transgenders is erroneous and against the Constitutional mandate as well as judgments of the Supreme Court," it said, adding that such action of the state government is *void ab initio* (null and void from the very beginning).

It said that the caste survey is ultra vires section 8 of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, which obligates the appropriate government to take steps for the welfare of the persons from the transgender community. A batch of pleas questioning the state

government's authority to notify the conduct of a caste-based survey in Bihar has been adjourned by the Supreme Court to January next year.

2. 'Pauradhwani', a programme organised by the Kerala State Literacy Mission



'Pauradhwani', a programme organised by the Kerala State Literacy Mission (KSLM) in coastal and tribal-dominated areas was launched recently in Ernakulam.

Pauradhwani:

- The Kerala State Literacy Mission (KSLM) announced Pauradhwani with the aim of shaping informed and independent citizens across 8 districts of Kerala.
- It would instil scientific aptitude, independent thinking, secularism, democratic spirit, constitutional values, and awareness about rights towards shaping independent citizens.

- **Classes, cultural programmes**, including indigenous arts forms, and visual-driven sessions would be held with **public participation**.
- An **anti-drug movement** was also included to tackle **drug menace** among youngsters in Varapuzha panchayat.
- A **pamphlet** detailing the **rights and responsibilities of citizens and values** of scientific temper, secularism, democratic spirit, and constitutional values was distributed.
- **Selected Areas:**
 - **Tribal population:** Palakkad, Wayanad, Malappuram and Thiruvananthapuram districts.
 - **Marginalized Coastal population:** Ernakulam, Alappuzha, Kozhikode, and Kasaragod districts.
- It was drawn by a **Six-point motto** which includes:
 - Ensuring the rights of the marginalised sections,
 - Strengthening democracy and brotherhood,
 - Building an egalitarian new Kerala society without any discrimination.
- **Topics to be covered** under the programme:
 - Independence struggle and tribespeople
 - Forest rights and Coastal rules
 - Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, coastal rules
 - Women-centric rules
 - Rights and laws governing children, health, and nutrition

3. TN Woman's Fight For India's 1st 'No Caste, No Religion' Certificate Is Crushing Stereotypes!



"I was brought up to think this way. My parents did not mention any caste or religion in my birth and school certificates." #EndTheStereotype .While elements like caste and religion create a sense of collective identity and community among some, they have, since time immemorial, been used as a tool to divide people, resulting in violence, discrimination, and public unrest.

Leading the way for people who want to reject these tools of division, MA Sneha, a lawyer from the Tehsildar of Tirupattur in Vellore district, Tamil Nadu has possibly become the first woman in India to acquire a no caste, no religion certificate in place of a community certificate.

A community certificate or caste certificate is a record issued by the State government. It certifies that a person belongs to a particular minority community like Scheduled Caste (SC), Scheduled Tribe (ST) or Other Backward Classes (OBCs).

It took her nine long years to receive the certificate.

"I was writing letters to the Tehsildar, requesting a no-community certificate in the beginning and they were rejected with barely a look. After

multiple attempts, I applied by employing a procedure they used for a community certificate in 2017. They had to answer the letter as it was numbered. They initially said there was no precedent for it, besides raising points like, 'what is the use of this certificate' and 'we cannot agree to give you one without any particular reason,'" informs Sneha.

B Priyanka Pankajam, the Sub-Collector of Tirupattur told the Hindu that they decided to give the certificate to Sneha after verifying all her documents and finding the caste and religion columns blank.

Since they felt the decision would not be harming anyone and was not made at the cost of another's identity, they used their discretion to come to a decision – and Sneha was given the certification she desired.

Sneha's desire for this certification could stem from the way she was raised. Her parents did not mention any caste or religion in her birth and school certificates and ensured that she and her two sisters, Jennifer and Mumtaz, identified only as Indian. Progressive thinking was a large part of her household and even her wedding to Mr Parthiba Raja, a Tamil professor, was devoid of any religious ceremonies. The couple has named their three daughters in the same way Sneha and her sisters had been.

"So, this is my lifestyle from the beginning. If this is how we live, then why shouldn't we get a 'no caste, no religion' certificate in place of a community certificate," says Sneha.

Ever since she received this no caste, no religion certificate and consequentially the publicity that came with it, many people have been asking Sneha if they could acquire this as well.

People without a community certificate can follow the same procedure Sneha has. But others must seek out the judicial system, as officials such as Tehsildar and Sub Collector don't have the authority to revoke given certificates.

Sneha plans to discuss this with some advocates and file a writ. "Through the writ, I seek a judicial or government order which will hopefully lay out

a procedure whereby people who are willing to get a 'no caste, no religion' certificate can acquire one," she tells us.

#EndTheStereotype

This story is part of The Stereotypeface Project, an initiative by The Better India that challenges 26 stereotypes, which continue to exist even today. We are showcasing these stereotypes through all the letters of the English language alphabet.

Stereotypes exist everywhere – they are passed down over generations. Instead of embracing and celebrating what makes us unique, we stand divided because of them!

PAPER - 2

INDIAN & TRIBAL ANTHROPOLOGY

1. Alu Kurumba art depicts the tribes' connection with nature



In the remote forests of the Nilgiris in Tamil Nadu, one man tries to keep the art of the Alu Kurumbas tribe alive despite the impact of a cultural shift.

Eluthu Paarai is an ancient 3000-year-old rock art site in the Kothagiri region of the Nilgiris district that was first discovered by an American anthropologist, Allen Zackerel, in 1984. Archaeologists maintain that they are definitely prehistoric, belonging to the Neolithic period in particular.

However, the local Kurumba tribe believes that this ancient art is the holy message of their ancestors.

Because they used to draw similar pictographs on the body of the patients with an incurable disease.

Moreover, the Alu Kurumbas are observed to venerate the 'anthropomorphic figure' of that site as their 'ancestral spirit' and believe that it could be revitalised by annual re-touching or re-drawing the ritual cult figure.

What is Alu Kurumba art?

Alu Kurumbas' paintings mostly depict ritualistic aspects of their way of life in the Nilgiris' isolated forests.

Images of nature, homes made of leaves and wood, women drying food grains, men gathering honey, weddings and rituals, earthen pens for hens, wild animals prowling the forest are just a few of the themes featured in this wonderful style of art.

The paintings are natural. They are drawn with burned twigs and traditionally done with four colours using an extracted resin. *Bodhi mann* soil is used for red and white colours, while *kari maram's* tree bark is used for black and the leaves of *kaatavarai* plant for green.

The aerial root of the banyan tree is used as a painting brush.

It is a slow and cumbersome process but the end results are beautiful paintings depicting the Alu Kurumbas' way of life.

A shift in culture

Traditionally Alu Kurumbas are hunter gatherers and horticulturists who primarily depend on their environment for livelihood.

When they were cultivating their staple food crops such as finger millet, little millet, foxtail millet, pearl millet, and pulses like cowpeas, they were largely self-sufficient.



Balasubramanian

explains the elements in a painting, which depicts their connection to nature

Various government interventions in the form of policies and welfare schemes have led to the alienation of nature from the life of Alu Kurumbas.

Initially the forests near their villages were largely converted into coffee and tea plantations and the Alu Kurumbas ended up working as labours in those plantations.

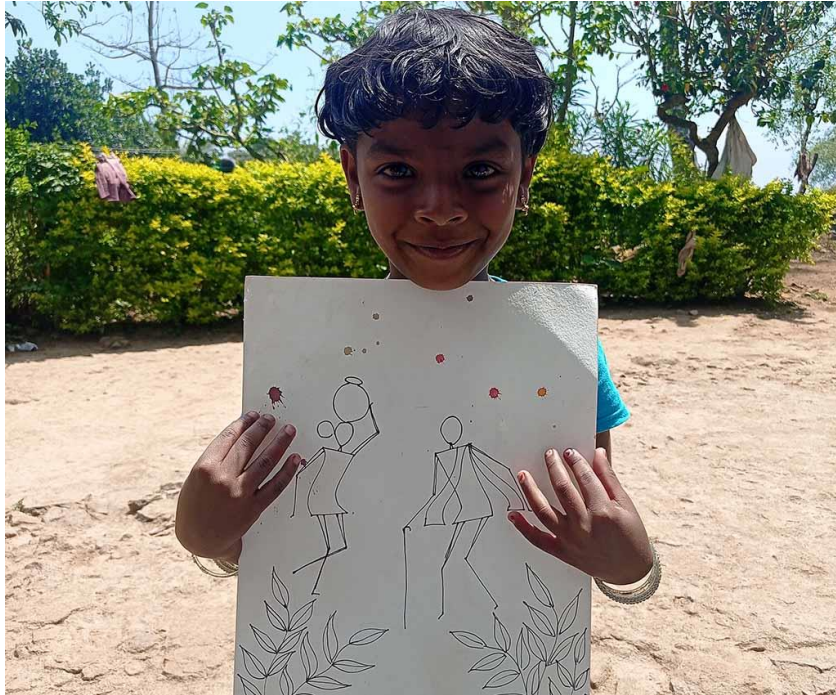
The sudden shift from agricultural land owner to plantation worker has distorted the way the Alu Kurumbas interact with their land.

The sudden shift from agricultural land owner to plantation worker has distorted the way the Alu Kurumbas interact with their land.

One man's effort at preserving the Alu Kurumba art

The change in the pattern of interaction between man and nature has also resulted in a change in their culture.

Though Alu Kurumbas are known to draw inspiration from their personal lives, the current generation hardly practices their traditional art.



A Kurumba girl, who is learning the art from Balasubramanian, shows her handiwork (Photo by Nagarajan R Durai)

During the time of my visit, I learnt that only one person, Balasubramanian, in the settlement was practicing their traditional art. (ALSO READ: Keeping Kurumba art alive)

He has been taking immense efforts to kindle an interest in the younger generation towards the Alu Kurumba art by teaching them the basics of the art and by buying them fabric paints.

One hopes that his efforts will bear fruit and the beautiful Alu Kurumba art will sustain, just like the rock art of their ancestors.

2. Inclusion of Communities in Jammu and Kashmir's Scheduled Tribes List

The Indian government has introduced the **Constitution (Jammu and Kashmir) Scheduled Tribes Order (Amendment) Bill, 2023**, aiming to

include four communities in the **Scheduled Tribes (ST)** list in Jammu and Kashmir.

□□The proposed inclusion of the "**Gadda Brahmin,**" "**Koli,**" "**Paddari Tribe,**" and "**Pahari Ethnic Group**" has sparked apprehensions regarding the distribution of reservation benefits.

What is the Process and Criteria of Inclusion in the ST List ?

□□**Criteria for Inclusion in the Scheduled List:** Determining whether a community qualifies as a Scheduled Tribe is based on several criteria, including:

- o **Ethnological Traits:** The community's distinct and identifiable ethnological traits are considered to establish its tribal identity.
- o **Traditional Characteristics:** Traditional practices, customs, and way of life are examined to assess the community's adherence to tribal culture.
- o **Distinctive Culture:** The presence of a unique and distinctive culture that sets the community apart from other groups.
- o **Geographical Isolation:** The community's geographical isolation is taken into account to assess its historic and continuous presence in specific regions.
- o **Backwardness:** Socio-economic backwardness is considered to evaluate the level of disadvantage faced by the community.

□□However, The **Constitution of India does not define the criteria** for recognition of STs.

o The **process initiates at the State or Union Territory level**, where the concerned government or administration recommends the inclusion of a specific community.

o The proposal is sent to the **Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs** for examination and further deliberations.

o After this, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, through its own deliberations, examines the proposal, and sends it to the **Registrar General of India (RGI)**.

□ Once approved by the RGI, the proposal is sent to the **National Commission for Scheduled Tribes**, following which the proposal is sent back to the Union government.

○

○ The inclusion of any community in the Scheduled Tribes list takes effect only after the **President assents to a Bill that amends the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950**, following its passage in both the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha.

What is the Status of Scheduled Tribes in India?

○ **Article 366(25)**: It only provides a process to define STs: "STs means such tribes or tribal communities or parts of or groups within such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under **Article 342 to be Scheduled Tribes for the purposes of this Constitution.**"

□ **Article 342(1)**: The President with respect to any State/UT (after consultation with the Governor in case of state) may specify the tribes/tribal communities/part of or groups within tribes/ tribal communities as a Scheduled Tribe in that State/UT.

○ **Fifth Schedule**: It lays out provisions for the Administration and Control of Scheduled Areas and STs in states other than 6th Schedule States.

○ **Sixth Schedule**: Deals with the **administration of the tribal areas in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.**

□□ Current Number of Officially Recognized Scheduled Tribes:

○ As per **Census 2011**, there are **705 ethnic groups** officially listed as Scheduled Tribes under Article 342.

○ The STs constitute **8.6% of the total population** and **11.3% of the rural population.**

○ **Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989.**

○ Provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996.

○ **Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006.**

3. For the first time, Bru refugees to have no participation in Mizoram Assembly polls

The 14,000 Bru refugees who have been resettled in Tripura will not be casting votes in the upcoming Mizoram Assembly election

For the first time Bru refugees will not participate in elections in Mizoram as they were given permanent settlement in Tripura under a Central government sponsored rehabilitation arrangement that came into effect in January 2020. Prior to this the Election Commission of India had to set up special polling stations on Tripura-Mizoram boundary to facilitate voting of the eligible displaced voters.

The Assembly election in Mizoram is slated for November 7; the first in the poll schedules for five election bound states.

The office of the CEO Mizoram earlier deleted over 14,000 Bru voters from the electoral rolls after they became permanent residents of Tripura. They are from the 6,959 families (37,136 persons) who were identified for permanent rehabilitation in Tripura with a financial package of ₹661 crore.

The evacuees had spent over two decades in six makeshift camps in north Tripura since they fled ethnic violence in Mizoram in October 1997. Repatriation and fresh influx of the Bru refugees in small groups continued till a quadripartite agreement involving Centre, Tripura, Mizoram governments and Bru refugee representatives signed on January 16 2020.

The resettlement of the Bru refugees in 12 identified places in Tripura is still ongoing and may take another few months to complete, officials here said. They added most of the conditions of the quadripartite agreement like free ration, financial allowances and essential commodities are regularly fulfilled under supervision of the designated government officials.

Even after large-scale rehabilitation in Tripura, hundreds of Bru tribe people continue to live in Mizoram, especially in the state's Mamit district which was the scene of ethnic strife in 1997. There is no data available to attribute the number enrolled in voter chart to exercise franchise in November 7 assembly election in Mizoram.

Who are Bru refugees?

- The Brus, also known as Reangs, are an indigenous tribal community native to **northeastern India**.
- They have **traditionally lived in regions** of Mizoram, Tripura, and Assam.
 - In **Mizoram**, they are scattered in Kolasib, Lunglei and Mamit districts.
- In the state of Tripura, the Brus are recognized as a **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG)**.
- Many **Brus of Assam and Tripura are Hindu**, the **Brus of Mizoram** converted to **Christianity** over the years.
- Many Brus living in Tripura have experienced over two decades of **internal displacement** as a result of ethnic persecution, primarily originating from the neighboring state of Mizoram.
- Being **ethnically distinct** from the **majority Mizos**, the Brus are often referred to as **Vai** in the state, meaning outsiders or non-Mizos.

4. Baiga tribal group gets habitat rights in Chhattisgarh: What this means, significance



Habitat rights are given to Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG) under the Forest Rights Act. Who are PVTGs? How do the habitat rights help them?

Ahead of Assembly elections in Chhattisgarh, the Baiga Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) Monday became the second to get habitat rights in the state, **after the Kamar PVTG on August 9.**

A total of 19 Baiga villages with a population of 6,483 people (2,085 families) have been given the habitat rights. These villages/para/tola of Gaurela block received the rights in a special event organised by the district administration of Gaurela-Pendra-Marwahi (GPM).

The Baiga community primarily resides in Rajnandgaon, Kawardha, Mungeli, Gaurela-Pendra-Marwahi (GPM), Manendra-Bharatpur-Chirmiri, and Bilaspur districts of the state. The community also lives in the adjacent districts of Madhya Pradesh.

What are habitat rights?

Habitat rights recognition provides the community concerned rights over their customary territory of habitation, socio-cultural practices, economic and livelihood means, intellectual knowledge of biodiversity and ecology, traditional knowledge of use of natural resources, as well as protection and conservation of their natural and cultural heritage.

Habitat rights safeguard and promote traditional livelihood and ecological knowledge passed down through generations. They also help converge different government schemes and initiatives from various departments to empower PVTG communities to develop their habitats.

What does 'habitat' mean, under what law are such rights granted?

Habitat rights are given to PVTGs under section 3(1) (e) [rights including community tenures of habitat and habitation for primitive tribal groups and pre-agricultural communities] of The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 also known as the Forest Rights Act (FRA).

According to Section 2(h) of FRA, "Habitat includes the area comprising the customary habitat and such other habitats in reserved forests and protected forests of primitive tribal groups and pre-agricultural communities and other forest dwelling Scheduled Tribes."

Can habitat rights be used to stop activities like mining?

Shomona Khanna, an advocate at the Supreme Court of India and former legal advisor to the Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs, said, "Of course, the habitat rights will help the PVTG protect their habitat from developmental activities harmful to them. The title may not be an ownership title in the nature of a private property owner, but consent and consultation of the gram sabha will be needed for any developmental activity. Forest Rights have legal protection under the Forest Conservation Act, the Land Acquisition law of 2013, and even the SC/ST Prevention of Atrocities. Act. Grant of habitat rights under the Forest Rights Act provide an additional layer of legal protection."

If any kind of development activity is hampering their habitat rights, the tribal group concerned can take up the matter with the administration under the Forest Rights Act, and if not resolved, the matter can be taken to court.

Which tribes are termed PVTG?

According to the ministry of tribal affairs, tribal communities who are technologically backward, who have stagnant or declining population growth, extremely low level of literacy, and a subsistence level of economy are declared as PVTG. PVTGs have low health indices and largely reside in isolated, remote, and difficult areas in small and scattered hamlets/habitats.

The ministry has identified 75 PVTGs in 18 states and one Union Territory. In 2019, the MoTA started a scheme for their protection and improvement in terms of social indicators like livelihood, health, nutrition and education to decrease their vulnerability.

How many states have recognised habitat rights?

Out of 75 PVTG in India, only three have habitat rights. The Bharia PVTG in Madhya Pradesh was the first, followed by the Kamar tribe and now the Baiga tribe in Chhattisgarh.

How many PVTGs does Chhattisgarh have?

There are seven PVTGs in Chhattisgarh, who live in 17 of the state's 33 districts. These are Kamar, Baiga, Pahadi Korba, Abujmadiya, Birhor, Pando and Bhujia. The total population of PVTG tribes in Chhattisgarh as per the 2015-2016 survey is 2.50 lakh while the population of tribals in Chhattisgarh as per the 2011 census is 78.22 lakh.

While the first five tribes have been declared PVTG by the central government, the remaining two, Pando and Bhujia, have been given the tag by the state government.

The seven tribes by population are Kamar tribe with 26,622 people, Abujmadiya tribe with 23,330 people, Baigas with 88,317 people, Pahadi

Korba with 44,026, Birhor with 3490 people, Pando with 32,000 people and Bhujia with 8,000 people, as per information provided by IAS Shammi Abidi, commissioner for Scheduled Tribe & Scheduled Caste Development Department.

How does the government fix a habitat?

Bibhore Kumar Deo, project head at United Nations Development Program (UNDP) which is providing technical assistance to the administration to implement the habitat rights law, said the procedure is based on a detailed guideline given for this purpose in 2014 by the MoTA.

Four state-level departments – Forest, Revenue, Tribal and Panchayati Raj – are coordinating with the UNDP team to ascertain what can be termed as habitat. “Based on the MoTA guidelines, the traditional tribal leaders of the tribe are consulted about the extent of their culture, traditions, occupation. It is corroborated by the government and then a habitat is declared,” said Deo.

When did the procedure of giving habitat rights to PVGTs begin in Chhattisgarh? As per sources, the first consultation for giving these rights began in December 2021. As a pilot project, the government began with Kamar tribes. “It is a long, tedious procedure. But after the pilot project, this procedure can go faster.

The PVTGs are introverts and reserved. It is quite a task to build a rapport and get them to respond. They live in their own world; they are happy with leading a very basic lifestyle,” said Deo. **How many Kamar tribes have got habitat rights so far?** Kamar tribes have a population of 26, 622 in four districts. Till now, 22 Para/Tola (hamlets) with a population of around 2,500 people from Magarlod sub region of Magarlod development block in Dhamtari district have got it. Also, out of the 88,317 Baiga tribes, 6,483 have got it.

5. Adivasis at bottom rung of India's development pyramid, finds Tribal Development Report 2022 What are the key findings of the report?



Tribal Population: India's tribal communities form 8.6% of the country's population according to the 2011 Census. – Of the 257 Scheduled Tribe districts, 230 (90%) are either forested or hilly or dry. But they account for 80% of India's tribal population.

Tribals most deprived: Tribals are at the bottom of the country's development pyramid even after 75 years of independence. Be it sanitation, education, nutrition, or access to drinking water and education, despite 70 years of independence, they are the most deprived.

Reason for deprivation: Tribal areas are areas that have faced a lot of disturbance and conflict. This is one of the reasons why many government welfare schemes and policies are unable to take off in these areas.

Tribal rights and environment: During British colonial rule, the bond between Adivasis and their relation of symbiosis with their immediate

environment was ruptured.

- After the enactment of the Forest Conservation Act in 1980, the conflict came to be seen as between environmental protection and the needs of local Adivasi communities, driving a wedge between people and forests.
- It was in the National Forest Policy of 1988 that domestic requirements of local people were explicitly recognised for the very first time.
- The Policy emphasized safeguarding their customary rights and closely associating Adivasis in the protection of forests. But the movement towards a people-oriented perspective has not been matched by reality on the ground.

What is the way forward suggested by the report?

It is important to understand the special characteristics of tribal communities to frame policies for them. There are many tribal communities that prefer isolation and silence. They are shy and are not going to reach out to the outside world on their own. Hence, policymakers and leaders of the country need to understand this trait and then work towards the welfare of Adivasis so that they connect with them in a better way.

6. Tamil Lambadi Art



Tamil Lambadi Art:

- Traditional Tamil Lambadi embroidery features **geometric patterns** including squares, rectangles, and circles.
- It draws **inspiration from the local environment**, including forests, birds, fruits, and flowers.
- These are **not the same** as those of the **Banjaras in Andhra Pradesh** or the **Lambanis in Karnataka**.
- Tamil Lambadi embroidery employs **silk** and **cotton** fabrics in a range of **colors**, preferably handwoven.
- It uses **embroidery skeins** and **sewing threads** for various stitches, applique work, **mirror work**, and patchwork.
- The **embroidery is adorned** with accessories such as mirrors, beads, coins, seashells, jewelry, bangles, cowries, buttons, and more.
- What sets this embroidery style apart is that it **does not have any distinct motifs** but has **varied stitch forms** and **distinct layouts and patterns**.

Key facts about the Lambadi community

- The Lambanis are also known as Banjaras, and most of them are found in **Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Tamilnadu, and Karnataka.**
- This community settled across the country with different names, have permanently abandoned their nomadic lifestyle and settled in their settlements called Tandas.
- They **speak Gor Boli**, also called Lambadi which belongs to the **Indo-Aryan Group of Languages**. Lambadi has no script.

Who were Lambadis?

- The Lambadis were a **nomadic tribe** where men were **involved in agricultural trade and pastoralism** and women were largely involved in **embroidery work**.
- They **came to Gujarat and Rajasthan from Afghanistan.**
- They moved to the southern part of India from Gujarat and Rajasthan over a period of time.
- The migration particularly gained pace around the 17th century, during the **reign of Aurangzeb**, the **Mughal emperor**, who was assisted by the Lambadis for the **transportation of goods** to the southern part of India.

7. Ao and Sümi Naga communities in Nagaland



Ao and Sümi Naga communities in Nagaland follow practices passed down through generations, preserving seeds from successful harvests for successive cycles.

- Traditionally agrarian, the Ao and Sümi Naga communities practise jhum or shifting cultivation

Ao Naga Community:

The Aos, a major Naga ethnic group in Nagaland's Mokokchung District, refer to themselves as Aoer, meaning "those who came" from across the Dikhu River. They were the first Nagas to embrace Christianity, incorporating Western education. The Moatsü Festival is observed in early

May after sowing, and the Tsüngremong Festival, the community's largest, is celebrated right after the harvest.

About Sumis:

The Sümis are a major Naga ethnic group inhabiting the territories of Zünheboto District, parts of Niuland District and Kiphire District in the Northeast Indian state of Nagaland.

They are recognised as a Scheduled Tribe (STs). The ancestral religion of the Sümis was the worship of nature. Sümis are 99% Christians. Very few of them still practice animism. Tülüni (July 8) is a festival of great significance for the Sümis.

8. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will launch the PM PVTG (Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups) Development Mission soon.



- Sources said the Modi Government will launch a 24 thousand crore rupee scheme to ensure holistic development of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups on the occasion of JanJaatiya Gaurav Divas.

About PM PVTG (Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups) Development Mission:-

- **Expected Launch: 2023.**
- **Ministry: Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment.**
- The launch of Pradhan Mantri PVTG Development Mission was announced in the budget of this year.
- **Objective:** to improve the socio-economic conditions of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups.
- There are **75 PVTGs in 18 States and Union Territories** living in 22 thousand 544 villages having a population of around 28 lakhs.
- These tribes stay in scattered, remote and inaccessible habitations, often in forest areas.

Salient Features:-

- The Mission plans to **saturate PVTG families and habitations with basic facilities.**
- These include **road and telecom connectivity, electricity, safe housing, clean drinking water and sanitation**, improved access to education, health and nutrition and sustainable livelihood opportunities. (Significance of Tribal Culture in Sustainable Development)
- A **fund of Rs 15,000 crore** for the next three years has been allocated for the socio-economic development of the group.
- It will be launched as part of '**Reaching The Last Mile**', one of the seven Saptarishi priorities enlisted in this year's Budget.
- The Mission will be implemented through the **convergence of 11 interventions of nine Ministries.**
- In addition, saturation will be ensured for schemes such as **Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojna, Sickle Cell Disease Elimination, TB Elimination, 100 percent immunisation, PM Surakshit Matritva Yojana, PM Matru Vandana Yojana, PM Poshan, and PM Jan Dhan Yojana.**
- **Implementation:** Among the ministries that are expected to be roped in to implement the PM-PVTG Mission are the Rural Development Ministry, the Water Resources Ministry, the Education Ministry, the Health Ministry and the Women and Child Development Ministry.

9. J&K govt notifies transport arrangements for migratory tribal families



The migration of families will commence from mid-September from higher reaches and will continue till November 2023

The Tribal Affairs Department in collaboration with J&K Road Transport Corporation and the respective District Administration has notified arrangements for migration of pastoral tribal families from Kashmir region to Jammu, with the onset of winter.

The migration of families will commence from mid-September from higher reaches and will continue till November 2023.

"The administrative council headed by Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha has approved the transport service for tribal population during migration as one of the key deliverables, which is being monitored by the Chief Secretary, Dr. Arun Kumar Mehta regularly," the statement said.

"Finance department has also earmarked required budget for this annual facility provided during summer and winter migration."

Every year the government deposes a fleet of trucks to ease the long-range migration through National Highway-44 and Mughal road. This year 150 trucks are being deployed to districts.

"The Deputy Commissioners have notified nodal officers for facilitating migration and making associated arrangements," the statement said.

10. Seed preservation and storage among the Ao and Sümi Naga



Researchers have recently discovered that the **traditional knowledge** of seed **storage** and preservation has been **orally passed** from one generation to another amongst the **Ao** and **Sümi Naga** communities.

Ao and Sümi Naga communities:

- The Ao and Sümi Naga are traditionally **agrarian communities** that have practised **jhum** or **shifting cultivation**.
- They commonly grow crops, such as **rice** and **millet** (Poaceae); pepper, tomato, brinjal, tobacco (Solanaceae); creepers and climbers (like Cucurbitaceae or cucurbits); and beans, lentils and legumes (Fabales).

Ao Naga Community:

- The Aos are a major Naga ethnic group native to **Nagaland**.
- They refer to themselves as **Aoer**, meaning "those who came" from across the **Dikhu River**.

- They were the **first** Nagas to embrace **Christianity**.
- The **Tsüngremong Festival** (Harvest Festival) is its **biggest festival**, which is celebrated immediately after the **harvest** of the crop.
- They follow animism as their religion.
- They majorly speak **Mongsen**, and **Chungli** as their language.

Sümi Naga Community:

- The Sümis are a major **Naga ethnic group** inhabiting the territories of the Northeast Indian state of Nagaland.
- They are recognised as STs (Scheduled Tribes) by India.
- The major festival celebrated by it includes **Tülüni**, and Ahuna.
 - **Tülüni** is a festive season that marks season of **plenty**, to strengthen the **bond** and settle differences amongst friends and foes.
 - Ahuna signifies the celebration of the season's harvest in **Thanksgiving**, while invoking the spirit of **good fortune** in the New Year.

How are the seeds selected by the Ao and Sümi Naga communities?

- **Seeds** selected for **cultivation** in **new jhum fields** depend on the **type of land**.
- Traditional jhum fields are of 2 kinds:
 - In **highlands**, the soil is loosely **condensed** and **glutinous**, which is better suited for maize, taro, mustard crops, glutinous rice and long grain rice;
 - In **lowlands**, the soil is compact and more porous, which is suitable for beans, chili and leguminous crops.
- The communities select seeds from **initial harvests** in new **jhum fields** to preserve them for **successive cycles**.

Storage of seeds and grains:

- Storage **methods** of seeds differ across crop varieties-
 - **Sun-dried seeds** include beans, sesame and mustard seeds.
 - Maize is bundled in rows above **fireplaces** or tied to **kitchen roofs**.

- **Poaceae** seeds such as rice, are stored in **household granaries** (called *jen* in **Ao** and *aleh* in **Sümi**).
- Pumpkin and mustard kernels are **sun-dried** in hollowed **calabashes** with **corn lids** or in baskets.
- Residents also build **community granaries** that are strategically positioned on the outskirts of villages to serve as a dependable resource in case of **emergencies**, such as a **fire**.
- The **multiple rectangular tiers** above the hearth in kitchen is used to store **seeds** and small agricultural **implements**.
 - Seeds of **Cucurbits**, **Solanaceae** and **Fabales** varieties are stored in them.
- An aeration tool called **tsükpongsemtsü** as per **Ao** is made of bamboo, to ensure **out-circulation** of warm air that can be detrimental to the preservation of grains.

11. Birsa Munda



Birth anniversary of **Birsa Munda** was recently celebrated across the country.

Birsa Munda:

- Birsa Munda was a **young freedom fighter** and a **tribal leader** during the late **19th century**, who had protested against British rule in India.
- He was born on **15 November 1875**.
- He belonged to the **Munda tribe** in the **Chhotanagpur Plateau** area of **Jharkhand**.
- He was called '**Dharti Abba**' (father of the earth) due to his greatness and achievements to free the tribals.
- He was also known as **Birsa Bhagwan**, amongst his followers.
- To recognise his impact on the national movement, the state of **Jharkhand** was created on his birth anniversary in **2000**.
- Government of India has declared **15th November** as **Janjatiya Gaurav Divas** in his memory in **2021**.

Creation of Birsait:

- He had received his **early education** under the guidance of his teacher **Jaipal Nag**, who recommended him to convert to **Christianity** in order to join the **German Mission school**.
 - He later left the school.
- He had gained awareness about the efforts of the **missionaries** to convert **tribals** to Christianity.
- In response, he had started the faith of '**Birsait**,' which was joined by the members of the **Munda** and **Oraon community**.
- A strict code of conduct was laid down where theft, lying, murder and begging was **prohibited**.

Seeds of rebel against Britishers:

- Between **1886 to 1890**, Birsa Munda had spent more time in **Chaibasa** which was central to the Sardars agitation.

- Their activities had a strong impact on the mind of the young Birsa, who soon became a part of the **anti-missionary and anti-government program**.

Ulgulan movement (1899):

- He rebelled against the **Chhotnagpur Tenancy Act, 1908**, the legislation that aimed to alienate **tribal land**, by using **weapons and guerrilla warfare** techniques.
- He mobilised the tribals who were suppressed for long by the **Dikus** (nontribals) and the intermediaries like **Thikadars, money lenders** and Zamindars who tried to exploit the tribals constantly.
- His famous quote was "**Maharani raj tundu jana oro abua raj ete Jana**", meaning the tribals shall end the rule of the queen and re-establish their own kingdom.
- In **1900**, he was arrested by the British police while he was sleeping with his tribal **guerilla army** at **Jamkopai forest** in Jharkhand.
- He died in Ranchi jail on June 9, **1900** at an age of **25**.

12. Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups in Chhattisgarh can now access contraceptives



High Court quashes decades-old practice of denying rights to Baigas and other tribes

Restrictions on access to permanent contraception methods for Chhattisgarh's Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG), enforced through two orders from 1979 and 2017, were quashed on December 12 by the high court there.

It was hearing a public interest litigation (PIL) by 10 families of the Baiga tribe, along with Jan Swasthya Sahyog, Ganiyari and Jan Swasthya Abhiyan (JSA) Chhattisgarh. PVTG comprises the Kamar, Pahari Korwa, Abhujhmaria and Birhor tribes apart from the Baigas. These are the most vulnerable among India's indigenous communities.

The Union government restricted their access to permanent contraceptives in 1979 to ensure their populations were maintained despite high mortality rates. It also kept them out of any forced sterilisation drive.

In 2017, an order was issued allowing women from these communities to be sterilised with the permission from the concerned subdivisional magistrate.

In 2016, women had sought sterilisation at the Jan Swasthya Sahyog hospital in Ganiyari, but they were denied permission ostensibly because of recent sterilisation deaths. The women already had 3-10 children; were weak, and from poor families.

Finding no reprieve, the families filed the PIL in February 2017, challenging the 1979 order on the grounds that it violates the constitutional rights to life, dignity and of equality before law. Among the women who filed the PIL (*Ranichand Baiga vs State of Chhattisgarh*) is Ranichand Baiga who was 26 at the time of filing and already had eight children.

According to a recent study published in journal *Reproductive Health Matters*, tattoo marks on Baiga women's foreheads are often used to deny them access to both permanent and temporary contraceptive services.

In recent years, the tribe has been asking for access to contraceptives as multiple pregnancies lead to impoverishment and malnutrition. To avoid this, Baiga women often travel to neighbouring states. Activists say that denying contraceptive services is a violation of reproductive and human rights and the right to self-determination and bodily autonomy.

“Now the government has to implement the court order and ensure that the health centres are aware about it and the officials there help the women who approach them,” says Sulakshana Nandi, state coordinator of JSA who had filed the PIL on the organization’s behalf. With the state government changing, it also has to be ensured that the implantation of the order does not get delayed unnecessarily.

13. How an IAS Officer Used a School To Bring The World to a Far-Flung Tribal Village



Setting an example for remote villages, IAS officer Krishnanunni H transformed the tribal hamlet of Kathirimalai in Tamil Nadu with a simple idea. Nestled inside the Chennampatti forest range in the Erode district of Tamil Nadu, the Kathirimalai hamlet can be accessed only by traversing the rough terrain on foot.

Even today, the hamlet has no roads and about 400 residents in the tribal-populated village have been living without basic amenities, far from the luxuries of internet connectivity and modern technologies. For them, quality education and transportation during medical emergencies have been a major concern as the nearest primary healthcare centre is 40 km away.

Its plight reversed only when an IAS officer trekked the hilly terrain to meet the tribal residents.

When a remote village gets 5G

Originally from Kerala and a 2012-batch IAS officer, Krishnanunni H took charge as the district collector of Erode in 2021. It was during his regular visits to the remote parts of the district that he came across the difficulties faced by these tribal residents.

In a conversation with The Better India, he says, “When it comes to health and education, Tamil Nadu usually has one of the best systems in place. For example, Erode district in the state is well developed.”

He continues, “But remote pockets like Kathirimalai, which are located deep within the forest, are inaccessible given its geographically difficult terrain. Tribal residents have to trek for 3-4 hours one way to avail health services. This makes it difficult for them to avail of any other welfare services as well.”

Upon trekking back from the hamlet, the officer decided to respond to the villagers’ woes with an effective solution.

“We started looking for solutions once the problem was identified. We did not intend to establish a new brick-and-mortar structure there. We wanted to utilise the resources that were already available (such as solar power). After brainstorming for solutions, we decided to introduce technology and initiate a tele-facilitation service in the remote village,” he says.

In early 2022, Krishnanunni launched the ‘*Punnagai*’ (meaning smile in Tamil) project that connected Kathirimalai with a high-speed 5GHz Wi-Fi

network to provide tele-medicine facilities and tele-education services to tribal residents.

The district administration roped in a team from Kerala-based Centre for Social Computing (C4S) to install a tower and set up the required hardware using solar power. Soon, the village had its WiFi network installed.

Connecting with the outside world

To get the programme rolling, the district administration established a tele-facilitation centre in a tribal school where residents are connected with medical officers and educational experts at the click of a button.

“Every week, a tele-health session is conducted for the public. Now instead of trekking down to the primary health centres, residents can come to the school and consult with the same medical officers,” says the IAS officer.

“Similarly, we focused on improving the overall learning outcomes for these children without compromising on the existing school curriculum. Children are connected to an educational expert who helps them improve their regular academics,” he adds.

As of now, 32 students from grades 1 to 8 are studying at the Government Tribal Residential Middle School on the hilltop. Over a video call, The Better India spoke to the enthusiastic students and one of the Tamil language teachers, Chandraseyer.

Explaining the functioning of the project, he says, “We organise these online classes from Monday to Friday between 10:30am to 3:30pm. Earlier, the students would be inactive and less interested in classes. They would not come to school regularly. But with these online classes, we observe excitement among students. When they talk to experts, they feel connected to the outside world.”

A win-win for all

Talking about the impact of the project, Krishnanunni says, “We periodically assess the improvement in learning outcomes of these children. Many children in the initial assessment had basic knowledge, but

now their learning levels have improved. Other than this, the dropout rate has reduced from 50 percent to nil.”

“In terms of health, people are now able to consult with doctors for primary issues like common colds, skin diseases, and anaemia, in an easier and quicker way. Their health-seeking behaviour has also improved,” he adds.

As of now, dedicated centres have been established in schools across 25 villages including Kalvarai, Arepalayam, and Hongalavadi benefitting 5,000 students and a tribal population of 12,000.

Looking at the success of the project, the Tamil Nadu government has announced plans to replicate the project across the state, says Krishnanunni.

“Along with my regular duties, I took this project as a priority. If you can bring a positive change in the most difficult places, then it could become an example for other similar villages. The expansion is a testimony to the success of the Kathirimalai project. In fact, the government has sanctioned a budget of Rs 10 crore to roll this project,” he says with pride.

Moreover, the IAS officer also focused on building community ownership. “We engaged tribal communities by training them to coordinate with health experts and educational experts, use the computer, and organise tele-facilitation every day,” he says.

This is the reason that even after Krishnaunni left the district to work as joint secretary in the Department of Finance, Government of Tamil Nadu, the project is still running. “Any programme can be initiated but a system needs to be put in place for the project to survive,” he adds.

“As an IAS officer or district collector, you have a lot of regular functions to execute but some projects are closer to your heart. When you see them at cutting-edge levels and catering to the needs of marginalised communities, it gives you immense satisfaction. There is nothing better than that,” he says with a smile.