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PAPER - 1

PHYSICAL & ARCHAEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

1. Widespread cultural diffusion of knowledge started 400 thousand years ago

Different groups of hominins probably learned from one another much earlier than was previously thought, and that knowledge was also distributed much further. A study by archaeologists at Leiden University on the use of fire shows that 400,000 years ago knowledge and skills must already have been exchanged via social networks. The discovery was published in *PNAS* on 19 July.

"To date it was always thought that cultural diffusion actually started only 70,000 years ago when modern humans, *Homo sapiens*, started to disperse. But the record for the use of fire now seems to show that this happened much earlier," archaeologist and researcher Katharine MacDonald explains.

Together with Wil Roebroeks, professor of the Evolution of the Human Niche, archaeologist Fulco Scherjon, research master's student Eva van Veen, and Krist Vaesen, associate professor in the Philosophy of Innovation at Eindhoven University of Technology, MacDonald conducted research on the traces of fire made by hominins at

archaeological sites in various places throughout the world. "We started to look differently at the data from decades of archaeological research."

Cultural diffusion

Cultural diffusion is the widespread distribution of objects, techniques or particular practices by people or hominins. Examples include children's songs or rhymes. Whether they are sung by a child in the United States in English or in Europe in a European language, they often sound the same. This is because people have passed knowledge of the melody and also, for example, the clapping rhythm via a learning process.

At many of those sites – in Israel and in Africa, Europe and possibly also China – the researchers found comparable traces, or combinations of traces, such as charcoal, carbonized bones and stones that had been subjected to heat. "We don't think that these similarities could be caused because early predecessors of humans themselves traveled great distances, or that they developed particular techniques separately from one another, for example because the human brain underwent sudden growth. There are no indications at all for that," MacDonald explains. The only other possibility is that different groups of hominins passed on these techniques and knowledge of raw materials to one another, and that primitive social networks must have existed.

The theory of the research team is supported by archaeological finds of a particular type of stone tool from a somewhat later period. These tools made using what is known as the Levallois technique pop up during a very short period in an increasing number of places in the Old World. There are also genetic traces that show that different hominin populations must have been in contact with one another.

Anthropology, primatology and social sciences

The researchers looked not only at archaeological evidence for the spread of the use of fire, but also at what is needed to exchange such knowledge. They therefore needed to know in what ways particular types of hominins could have been in social contact with one another. MacDonald: "It became a strongly interdisciplinary study. Besides archaeological data, we also integrated knowledge from anthropology, primatology and the social sciences. That's something I'm very proud of."

"Exciting and at the same time terrifying," is how MacDonald describes the publication of the research findings in scientific journal *PNAS*. "We worked on the article for a year and a half; it was completely rewritten twice and we shared it with just a couple of colleagues. But now the whole world can read it and there will no doubt be people who don't agree with us."

Still, she hopes that the article will lead to new questions in archaeology and other scientific disciplines. For MacDonald, the most important question is: what was it that made widespread cultural diffusion possible 400,000 years ago? "I hope we can change the discussion surrounding fire use by hominins. That we look more at what the use of fire meant for human development and how that related to social change."

2. .An Indigenous people in the Philippines have the most Denisovan DNA

Indigenous Ayta Magbukon people get 5 percent of their DNA from the mysterious ancient hominids

Denisovans are an elusive bunch, known mainly from ancient DNA samples and traces of that DNA that the ancient hominids shared when

they interbred with *Homo sapiens*. They left their biggest genetic imprint on people who now live in Southeast Asian islands, nearby Papua New Guinea and Australia. Genetic evidence now shows that a Philippine Negrito ethnic group has inherited the most Denisovan ancestry of all. Indigenous people known as the Ayta Magbukon get around 5 percent of their DNA from Denisovans, a new study finds.

This finding fits an evolutionary scenario in which two or more Stone Age Denisovan populations independently reached various Southeast Asian islands, including the Philippines and a landmass that consisted of what's now Papua New Guinea, Australia and Tasmania. Exact arrival dates are unknown, but nearly 200,000-year-old stone tools found on the Indonesian island of Sulawesi may have been made by Denisovans (SN: 1/13/16). *H. sapiens* groups that started arriving around 50,000 years ago or more then interbred with resident Denisovans.

Evolutionary geneticists Maximilian Larena and Mattias Jakobsson, both at Uppsala University in Sweden, and their team describe the new evidence August 12 in *Current Biology*.

Even as the complexities of ancient interbreeding in Southeast Asia become clearer, Denisovans remain a mysterious crowd. "It's unclear how the different Denisovan groups on the mainland and on Southeast Asian islands were related [to each other] and how genetically diverse they were," Jakobsson says.

Papua New Guinea highlanders – estimated to carry close to 4 percent Denisovan DNA in the new study – were previously thought to be the modern record holders for Denisovan ancestry. But the Ayta Magbukon display roughly 30 percent to 40 percent more Denisovan ancestry than Papua New Guinea highlanders and Indigenous Australians, Jakobsson says. That calculation accounts for recent mating of East Asians with Philippine Negrito groups, including the Ayta Magbukon, that diluted Denisovan inheritance to varying degrees.

Genetic analyses suggest that Ayta Magbukon people retain slightly more Denisovan ancestry than other Philippine Negrito groups due to having mated less often with East Asian migrants to the island around 2,281 years ago, the scientists say. Their genetic analyses compared ancient DNA from Denisovans and Neandertals with that of 1,107 individuals from 118 ethnic groups in the Philippines, including 25 Negrito populations. Comparisons were then made to previously collected DNA from present-day Papua New Guinea highlanders and Indigenous Australians.

The new report underscores that “still today there are populations that have not been fully genetically described and that Denisovans were geographically widespread,” says paleogeneticist Cosimo Posth of the University of Tübingen in Germany, who was not part of the new research.

But it’s too early to say whether Stone Age *Homo* fossils found on Southeast Asian islands come from Denisovans, populations that interbred with Denisovans or other *Homo* lineages, Posth says. Only DNA extracted from those fossils can resolve that issue, he adds. Unfortunately, ancient DNA preserves poorly in fossils from tropical climates.

Only a handful of confirmed Denisovan fossils exist. Those consist of a few fragmentary specimens from a Siberian cave where Denisovans lived from around 300,000 to 50,000 years ago and a roughly 160,000-year-old partial jaw found on the Tibetan Plateau

Fossils from the Philippines initially classed as *H. luzonensis*, dating to 50,000 years ago or more (SN: 4/10/19), might actually represent Denisovans. But a lack of consensus on what Denisovans looked like leaves the evolutionary identity of those fossils uncertain.

Larena and Jakobsson’s findings “further increase my suspicions that Denisovan fossils are hiding in plain sight” among previously excavated discoveries on Southeast Asian islands, says population geneticist João

Teixeira of the University of Adelaide in Australia, who did not participate in the new study.

Geographic ancestry patterns on Southeastern Asian islands and in Australia suggest that this region was settled by a genetically distinct Denisovan population from southern parts of mainland East Asia, Teixeira and his colleagues reported in the May *Nature Ecology & Evolution*.

3. Skull found in China represents a new human species, our closest ancestor: Scientists

A handout screen grab obtained from EurekAlert! shows a virtual reconstruction of the Harbin cranium. Scientists announced on June 25, 2021 that a skull discovered in Northeast China represents a newly discovered human species they have named *Homo longi* or “Dragon Man”, and the lineage may replace Neanderthals as our closest relatives. Photo: EurekAlert! via AFP

***Homo longi*, or “Dragon Man”, scientists say, should replace Neanderthals as our closest relatives.**

Scientists announced on June 25 that a skull discovered in northeast China represents a newly discovered human species they have named *Homo longi*, or “Dragon Man” – and they say the lineage should replace Neanderthals as our closest relatives.

The Harbin cranium was discovered in the 1930s in the city of the same name in Heilongjiang Province, but was reportedly hidden in a well for 85 years to protect it from the Japanese Army.

It was later dug up and handed to Ji Qiang, a professor at Hebei GEO University, in 2018. “On our analyses, the Harbin group is more closely

linked to *H. sapiens* than the Neanderthals are — that is, Harbin shared a more recent common ancestor with us than the Neanderthals did,” co-author Chris Stringer of the Natural History Museum, London told AFP. “If these are regarded as distinct species, then this is our sister (most closely related) species.”

The findings were published in three papers in the journal *The Innovation*. The skull dates back at least 146,000 years, placing it in the Middle Pleistocene. It could hold a brain comparable in size to that of modern humans but with larger eye sockets, thick brow ridges, a wide mouth and oversized teeth.

“While it shows typical archaic human features, the Harbin cranium presents a mosaic combination of primitive and derived characters setting itself apart from all the other previously named *Homo* species,” said Ji, a co-author of the study.

The name is derived from Long Jiang, which literally means “Dragon River”. The team believe the cranium belonged to a male, around 50 years old, living in a forested floodplain. “This population would have been hunter-gatherers, living off the land,” said Stringer. “From the winter temperatures in Harbin today, it looks like they were coping with even harsher cold than the Neanderthals.”

Given the location where the skull was found as well as the large-sized man it implies, the team believe *H. longi* may have been well adapted for harsh environments and would have been able to disperse throughout Asia.

Family tree

Researchers first studied the external morphology of the cranium using over 600 traits, and then ran millions of simulations using a computer model to build trees of relatedness to other fossils.

“These suggest that Harbin and some other fossils from China form a third lineage of later humans alongside the Neanderthals and *H. sapiens*,” explained Prof. Stringer.

If *Homo sapiens* had reached East Asia at the time *Homo longi* was present, they might have interbred, though this is not clear. There are also many unanswered questions about their culture and technology level, because of a lack of archaeological material. But the finding could still reshape our understanding of human evolution. “It establishes a third human lineage in East Asia with its own evolutionary history and shows how important the region was for human evolution,” said Prof. Stringer.

4. Modern Human brain originated 1.7 million years ago in Africa New study reveals

The first populations of the genus *Homo*, which emerged in Africa about 2.5 million years ago, walked straight up but they had brains similar to primitive ape, about half the size of ours.

One of the most intriguing questions we face is: When and where did the modern human brain evolve? The first populations of the genus *Homo*, which emerged in Africa about 2.5 million years ago, walked straight up but they had brains similar to primitive ape, about half the size of ours. So an international team of researchers at the University of Zurich (UZH), Switzerland, spent a lot of time and energy to come to find the answers.

They concluded that the modern human brain evolved around 1.7 million years ago in Africa, the time when the extinct human *Homoerectus* first appeared and the culture of stone tools in Africa became increasingly complex. The *homoerectus* species was the first known hominin to migrate out of Africa were adept at cognitive tasks

such as communicating and hunting or food gathering. The researchers, too, have concluded that the typical human brain spread rapidly from Africa to Asia.

According to the study published in *Journal Science*, the UZH team, led by Christoph Zollikofer and Marcia Ponce de León, examined the skulls of Homo fossils that lived in Africa and Asia 1 to 2 million years ago.

“Our analyses suggest that modern human brain structures emerged only 1.5 to 1.7 million years ago in African Homo populations,” Zollikofer said.

“The features typical to humans are primarily those regions in the frontal lobe that are responsible for planning and executing complex patterns of thought and action, and ultimately also for language,” said anthropologist Ponce de León.

The researchers believe that biological and cultural evolution are probably linked. Ponce de León said that it is likely the earliest forms of human language also developed during this period.

The UZH team used computed tomography to examine the skulls of Homo fossils that lived in Africa and Asia 1 to 2 million years ago, and compared the fossil data with reference data from great apes and humans.

SOCIO – CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

1. Live-in relationships vs morality: A case for strengthening Domestic Violence Act

The apex court held that two adults living together cannot be considered unlawful

The Supreme Court of India, for the first time in the case of *S. Khushboo v. Kanniammal* (2010) gave legal recognition to live-in relationships by categorizing them as “domestic relationships” protected under the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 (“DV Act”). The Court held that a live-in relationship comes within the ambit of the right to life enshrined under Article 21 of the Constitution of India. The Court further held that live-in relationships are permissible and that the act of two adults living together, in any case, cannot be considered illegal or unlawful. However, they have become a developing area of controversy with respect to the types of live-in relationships that are recognized. The Supreme Court in *Indra Sarma v. V.K.V. Sarma* (2013) categorized live-in relationships into two—domestic cohabitation between two unmarried individuals and domestic cohabitation between a married and unmarried individual or two married individuals. The Supreme Court has only recognized the former and not the latter. This article explores the contours of the validity of the latter category of relationships.

Conflicting views

The High Courts of Bombay, Allahabad and Rajasthan have repeatedly refused to grant protection to such live-in couples, citing reasons that a live-in relationship between a married and an unmarried person is illegal. The Punjab and Haryana High Court went a step further and referred to these relationships as unacceptable, claiming that they destroy the country’s ‘social fabric’. However, the Delhi High Court, taking a contrarian stand, adopted a wider approach, upholding the rights of a female live-in partner, irrespective of the marital status of both individuals.

Nature of relationship and bigamy

Section 2(f) of the DV Act defines a domestic relationship as a relationship in the 'nature of marriage' between two people/adults living in a shared household. There are two main reasons for recognizing relationships in the aforementioned 'latter' category. Firstly, in our opinion, live-in relationships involving a married person fall within the four corners of 'domestic relationships' under the DV Act. This view found judicial endorsement by the Madras High Court in the case of *Malarkodi @ Malar v. The Chief Internal Audit Officer* (2021), wherein, adopting a wide interpretation of Section 2(f), the Court acknowledged it to be broad enough in its scope to encompass relationships of the aforementioned latter category. Furthermore, it is pertinent to note that the definition of live-in relationships as the law is understood currently was conceptualized during the erstwhile adultery regime, which has since been declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in *Joseph Shine v. Union of India* (2018), thus wiping off adultery from the criminal statute books. In view of this, it is imperative that the aforementioned latter category of live-in relationships must be recognized, particularly from the perspective of the DV Act.

Secondly, a strong case can be made that a live-in relationship between a married person and an unmarried person does not fall within the penal scope of bigamy (Section 494 Indian Penal Code). The provision is explicitly clear that it is only a second 'marriage' during the lifetime of the husband or wife that can attract criminality. Nowhere does the section say that a live-in relationship which is in the 'nature of marriage' will be considered to be an implicit marriage under personal law. The object of the DV Act was primarily to provide protection for the wife or female live-in partner from violence at the hands of the husband or the male live-in partner. When a woman, whether married or not, is in a domestic relationship with a man, the focus of the DV Act violation enquiry is centered on the tangible harm caused to the woman and the consequent protection of the woman. Any denial of protection would be a grave injustice to the women who are suffering. Unfortunately, the Bombay, Allahabad, Rajasthan, and Punjab High Courts have denied such victims protection on the moral grounds that such relationships

violate the sanctity of marriage and promote bigamy. However, we respectfully disagree; the courts could not be further away from the correct position. Acceptance of the aforementioned category of live-in relationships as akin to a domestic relationship for the purposes of Section 2(f) of the DV Act does not ipso facto promote bigamy nor is it an attack on the institution of marriage. By just considering the live-in couple to be in a domestic relationship, the married woman/wife is not being deprived of her matrimonial rights of maintenance, legitimacy & custody of children etc. It merely acknowledges the existing factual reality of our society and astutely promotes the salient goals of protection of women enshrined under the DV Act.

The way forward

People may view a live-in relationship between a married person and an unmarried person as unethical, but moral policing is not an option, especially when the arrangement is sanctioned by the touchstones of fundamental rights. In view of the contradictory findings of various courts on the matter concerned, it is laudable that the Punjab and Haryana High Court is the first court which has recently constituted a larger bench to consider the above stated vexed position of the law. However, the Punjab and Haryana High Court's findings will not be the final say on the matter. Ultimately, this controversy can be settled either by the Supreme Court of India ironing out the differences between the respective high courts or by way of a central legislation clarifying the position.

2. Early humans may have survived the harsh winters by hibernating

Bears do it. Bats do it. Even European hedgehogs do it. And now it turns out that early human beings may also have been at it. They hibernated, according to fossil experts.

Evidence from bones found at one of the world's most important fossil sites suggests that our hominid predecessors may have dealt with extreme cold hundreds of thousands of years ago by sleeping through the winter.

The scientists argue that lesions and other signs of damage in fossilised bones of early humans are the same as those left in the bones of other animals that hibernate. These suggest that our predecessors coped with the ferocious winters at that time by slowing down their metabolisms and sleeping for months.

The conclusions are based on excavations in a cave called Sima de los Huesos – the pit of bones – at Atapuerca, near Burgos in northern Spain.

Over the past three decades, the fossilised remains of several dozen humans have been scraped from sediments found at the bottom of the vertiginous 50-foot shaft that forms the central part of the pit at Atapuerca. The cave is effectively a mass grave, say researchers who have found thousands of teeth and pieces of bone that appear to have been deliberately dumped there. These fossils date back more than 400,000 years and were probably from early Neanderthals or their predecessors.

The site is one of the planet's most important palaeontological treasure troves and has provided key insights into the way that human evolution progressed in Europe. But now researchers have produced an unexpected twist to this tale.

In a paper published in the journal *L'Anthropologie*, Juan-Luis Arsuaga – who led the team that first excavated at the site – and Antonis Bartsiokas, of Democritus University of Thrace in Greece, argue that the fossils found there show seasonal variations that suggest that bone growth was disrupted for several months of each year.

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They suggest these early humans found themselves “in metabolic states that helped them to survive for long periods of time in frigid conditions with limited supplies of food and enough stores of body fat”. They hibernated and this is recorded as disruptions in bone development.

The researchers admit the notion “may sound like science fiction” but point out that many mammals including primates such as bushbabies and lemurs do this. “This suggests that the genetic basis and physiology for such a hypometabolism could be preserved in many mammalian species including humans,” state Arsuaga and Bartsiokas.

The pattern of lesions found in the human bones at the Sima cave are consistent with lesions found in bones of hibernating mammals, including cave bears. “A strategy of hibernation would have been the only solution for them to survive having to spend months in a cave due to the frigid conditions,” the authors state.

They also point to the fact that the remains of a hibernating cave bear (*Ursus deningeri*) have also been found in the Sima pit making it all the more credible to suggest humans were doing the same “to survive the frigid conditions and food scarcity as did the cave bears”.

The authors examine several counter-arguments. Modern Inuit and Sámi people – although living in equally harsh, cold conditions – do not hibernate. So why did the people in the Sima cave?

The answer, say Arsuaga and Bartsiokas, is that fatty fish and reindeer fat provide Inuit and Sami people with food during winter and so preclude the need for them to hibernate. In contrast, the area around the Sima site half a million years ago would not have provided anything like enough food. As they state: “The aridification of Iberia then could not have provided enough fat-rich food for the people of Sima during the harsh winter - making them resort to cave hibernation.”

A museum exhibit of a Neanderthal family, who faced brutal winters.

Photograph: Nikola Solic/Reuters
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“It is a very interesting argument and it will certainly stimulate debate,” said forensic anthropologist Patrick Randolph-Quinney of Northumbria University in Newcastle. “However, there are other explanations for the variations seen in the bones found in Sima and these have to be addressed fully before we can come to any realistic conclusions. That has not been done yet, I believe.”

Chris Stringer of the Natural History Museum in London pointed out that large mammals such as bears do not actually hibernate, because their large bodies cannot lower their core temperature enough. Instead they enter a less deep sleep known as torpor. In such a condition, the energy demands of the human-sized brains of the Sima people would have remained very large, creating an additional survival problem for them during torpor.

“Nevertheless, the idea is a fascinating one that could be tested by examining the genomes of the Sima people, Neanderthals and Denisovans for signs of genetic changes linked with the physiology of torpor,” he added.

3. Gendered division of labor shaped the human spatial behavior



Navigating, exploring and thinking about space are part of daily life, whether it's carving a path through a crowd, hiking a backcountry trail or maneuvering into a parking spot.

For most of human history, the driving force for day-to-day wayfinding and movement across the landscape was a need for food. And unlike other primates, our species has consistently divided this labor along gender lines.

In new research published in *Nature Human Behaviour*, scientists including James Holland Jones of Stanford and lead author Brian Wood of University of California, Los Angeles, argue that the increasingly gendered division of labor in human societies during the past 2.5 million years dramatically shaped how our species uses space, and possibly how we think about it.

Underlying these conclusions is a huge and detailed trove of travel data revealing stark differences in the ways men and women among the nomadic Hadza people of Tanzania use space. A contemporary hunter-gatherer society, the Hadza provide a window into a highly mobile lifestyle, which was the norm for our species before the widespread adoption of agriculture.

"We're taking gender differences as a given in this particular cultural setting, and then asking what consequences they have downstream," said Jones, an associate professor of Earth system science at Stanford's School of Earth, Energy & Environmental Sciences (Stanford Earth) and a senior fellow at Stanford Woods Institute for the Environment.

A better understanding of this dynamic could yield clues about why men and women seem to think about space differently. Research in many human populations suggests men and women are better at different types of spatial tasks. On average, women tend to excel on spatial memory tasks, while men tend to score higher on two basic measures of spatial cognition associated with movement: mental rotation of objects and accurately pointing to distant locations.

'Male work is more navigationally challenging'

The paper examines a popular theory that men's hunting for wild game would produce more extensive and sinuous travel, and that women's harvesting of plant foods would lead to more concentrated, straight-line travel to and from known locations.

While previous efforts to substantiate the theory have relied heavily on verbal accounts, the researchers here tested it by examining more than 13,000 miles of travel logged on lightweight GPS trackers worn by Hadza foragers between 2005 and 2018. "One or two researchers would walk through camp early in the morning as people were rousing," the authors write. "We would greet people at their homes or hearths and hand out GPS devices to be worn during the day."

Around nightfall, when most people had returned to camp, Wood and assistants hired in the Hadza community removed the devices. They ultimately used data from 179 people, representing 15 camps and ranging in age from two to 84 years old.

The authors also examined the degree of overlap in the lands visited by men and women. "One of the most surprising results of this study was

the fact that Hadza men and women essentially occupy different worlds from a young age. In our data, most of the landscape was effectively gender-segregated," said Wood, an assistant professor of anthropology at UCLA who began working on this paper a decade ago as a postdoctoral scholar at Stanford.

To analyze the movement data, the researchers adopted techniques from the field of movement ecology and also developed custom software. As expected, the results show men walked further per day, covered more land in less direct paths and were more likely to travel alone. "In this hunting and gathering context, male work is more navigationally challenging," the researchers write.

Although some individual day journeys extended to 20 miles or more, Hadza men overall averaged eight miles per day and women -- many of them accompanied by young children -- averaged nearly five miles. Gender differences emerged by the age of six. From the mid-forties, the gender difference declined, mostly due to decreasing travel by men while women sustained more of their daily mileage.

Human mobility in a changing world

Detailed spatial data like those amassed in this study will aid future comparative research into human mobility, according to the authors. This holds particular resonance in light of a pandemic that has forced sudden revisions of normal movement patterns and heightened attention to the costs and benefits of different spatial habits.

Already, Wood has begun to apply technical, logistical and scientific lessons from this study to a new National Science Foundation project meant to help identify research and policy priorities to prepare the U.S. for inevitable future pandemics -- in part by measuring mobility and modeling patterns of social interaction. "The study of human movement can be used to identify at-risk communities for disease transmission and spread," Wood explained.

Even when we're not in a pandemic, Jones said, people's mobility drives economic activity, social cohesion and environmental impacts. And the environment, in turn, shapes spatial behavior. That feedback loop is at the heart of some of the internal migration patterns already emerging as a response to global warming. As once-rare weather events become commonplace, Jones explained, migrant laborers will likely travel longer distances for work; more people will engage in seasonal migration to pursue agricultural work or escape hurricanes and droughts, and crop failures will drive more rural residents to urban areas.

"Changing mobility is going to be one of the key ways that humans adapt to a heated world," Jones said. "Knowing more about gender differences and other drivers for spatial behaviors across a wide swath of human populations and ecological contexts will help us anticipate how this adaptation will play out and inform policies to manage it."

The research received funding from the National Science Foundation, the Leakey Foundation, the Wenner-Gren Foundation, the National Geographic Society, Yale University, UCLA and the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology.

4. Culture drives human evolution more than genetics

In a new study, University of Maine researchers found that culture helps humans adapt to their environment and overcome challenges better and faster than genetics.

After conducting an extensive review of the literature and evidence of long-term human evolution, scientists Tim Waring and Zach Wood concluded that humans are experiencing a "special evolutionary transition" in which the importance of culture, such as learned

knowledge, practices and skills, is surpassing the value of genes as the primary driver of human evolution.

Culture is an under-appreciated factor in human evolution, Waring says. Like genes, culture helps people adjust to their environment and meet the challenges of survival and reproduction. Culture, however, does so more effectively than genes because the transfer of knowledge is faster and more flexible than the inheritance of genes, according to Waring and Wood.

Culture is a stronger mechanism of adaptation for a couple of reasons, Waring says. It's faster: gene transfer occurs only once a generation, while cultural practices can be rapidly learned and frequently updated. Culture is also more flexible than genes: gene transfer is rigid and limited to the genetic information of two parents, while cultural transmission is based on flexible human learning and effectively unlimited with the ability to make use of information from peers and experts far beyond parents. As a result, cultural evolution is a stronger type of adaptation than old genetics.

Waring, an associate professor of social-ecological systems modeling, and Wood, a postdoctoral research associate with the School of Biology and Ecology, have just published their findings in a literature review in the *Proceedings of the Royal Society B*, the flagship biological research journal of The Royal Society in London.

"This research explains why humans are such a unique species. We evolve both genetically and culturally over time, but we are slowly becoming ever more cultural and ever less genetic," Waring says.

Culture has influenced how humans survive and evolve for millenia. According to Waring and Wood, the combination of both culture and genes has fueled several key adaptations in humans such as reduced aggression, cooperative inclinations, collaborative abilities and the capacity for social learning. Increasingly, the researchers suggest,

human adaptations are steered by culture, and require genes to accommodate.

Waring and Wood say culture is also special in one important way: it is strongly group-oriented. Factors like conformity, social identity and shared norms and institutions -- factors that have no genetic equivalent -- make cultural evolution very group-oriented, according to researchers. Therefore, competition between culturally organized groups propels adaptations such as new cooperative norms and social systems that help groups survive better together.

According to researchers, "culturally organized groups appear to solve adaptive problems more readily than individuals, through the compounding value of social learning and cultural transmission in groups." Cultural adaptations may also occur faster in larger groups than in small ones.

With groups primarily driving culture and culture now fueling human evolution more than genetics, Waring and Wood found that evolution itself has become more group-oriented.

"In the very long term, we suggest that humans are evolving from individual genetic organisms to cultural groups which function as superorganisms, similar to ant colonies and beehives," Waring says. "The 'society as organism' metaphor is not so metaphorical after all. This insight can help society better understand how individuals can fit into a well-organized and mutually beneficial system. Take the coronavirus pandemic, for example. An effective national epidemic response program is truly a national immune system, and we can therefore learn directly from how immune systems work to improve our COVID response."

PAPER - 2

INDIAN & TRIBAL ANTHROPOLOGY

1. Pradhan Mantri-Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PM-PVTG) Development Mission



The Prime Minister will launch the PM-PVTG Development Mission in a bid to empower the tribals on the birth anniversary of Birsa Munda, which has been celebrated as Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas.

Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)

- **PVTGs are a more vulnerable group among tribal groups in India.**
- **These groups have primitive traits, geographical isolation, low literacy, zero to negative population growth rate and backwardness.**
- **Moreover, they are largely dependent on hunting for food and a pre-agriculture level of technology.**
- **In 1973, the Dhebar Commission set up a separate category for Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs). In 1975, the Centre identified 52 tribal groups as PTGs. In 1993, 23 more groups were added to the list. Later, in 2006, these groups were named PVTGs.**
- **Currently, there are 2.8 million PVTGs belonging to 75 tribes across 22,544 villages in 220 districts across 18 states and Union Territories in India.**
- **According to the 2011 Census, Odisha has the largest population of PVTGs at 866,000. It is followed by Madhya Pradesh at 609,000 and Andhra Pradesh (including Telangana) at 539,000.**
- **The largest PVTG is Odisha's Saura community, numbering 535,000.**

PM-PVTG Development Mission:

- **The Rs 24,000-crore project is aimed at the development of the PVTGs.**
- **It has been designed to bring critical infrastructure like power, water, road connectivity, housing, education, and healthcare to the PVTG communities living in remote villages.**
- **Under the scheme, about 11 interventions like the PM-Gram Sadak Yojana, PM-Gram Awaas Yojana, Jal Jeevan Mission, and**

others will be taken to these target villages through the coordinated work of nine ministries.

- In addition, saturation will be ensured for schemes such as the 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.

2. 'Gujjar-Bakharwals Army's Eyes and Ears in J&K, Need to Rebuild Old Ties'



In light of the spike in militant activity in Jammu and Kashmir and after the death of three civilians in Poonch, allegedly after torture in Army custody, retired Lieutenant General Deependra Singh Hooda has said

that the Army needs to build back its relations with the Gujjars-Bakharwal community, calling them the “eyes and ears” of the forces.

The Army veteran told the *New Indian Express* that a disconnect seems to have developed between the civilians – the tribal Gujjars-Bakharwals – and the Army because of which there is a lack of ground intelligence on infiltration of foreign terrorists.

Retired Lieutenant General Deependra Singh Hooda. Photo: Ministry of Defence

“Gujjar-Bakharwals are nomads and have traditionally supported the Indian Army and have been one of the biggest reasons behind the roll back of insurgency from Jammu,” Hooda said. Rukhsana Kausar KC, a young Gujjar woman from Upper Kalsi, had shot down a Lashkar-e-Toiba militant in Rajouri district in 2009, the paper reported.

“There seems to be some laxity in procedures, which may have developed during the long militancy-free period (Poonch, Rajouri were declared militancy free by the Jammu and Kashmir police in 2011). How much did we lose out on the local connect when nothing was happening?” the Army veteran asked.

Throughout the year, these nomadic communities move along with their herds of sheep between the Kashmir Valley and Poonch, Rajouri in Pir Panjal belt and carry very useful information. “There is an urgent need to build back the old connection with the community,” Hooda said.

He also said that the Army needs to review the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) on counter insurgency operations in Poonch and Rajouri areas. “There are stringent counter insurgency SOPs. Besides revamping ground intelligence, and investing in sources and assets who give us actionable intelligence, the Army needs to review the SOPs on movement of troops, whether they need additional troops in the region along with better protected bullet-proof vehicles,” Hooda said.

While militancy-related violence and local recruitment had gone down significantly in Kashmir Valley, militants seem to have shifted the focus seemingly towards Jammu which was a militancy-free region before August 5, 2019 when Article 370 was read down.

On December 21, an ambush by terrorists at Dhatyar Morh in the Surankote area of Poonch resulted in the death of four soldiers and injuries to three others. Following the attack, three people from the Gujjar community, who were picked up by the Army died in custody, leading to anger within the community. A video clip showing uniformed soldiers from 48 Rashtriya Rifles torturing the men also surfaced on social media. Mobile internet was shut down after the incident, the report said.

In an attempt to mitigate the community's unrest, on December 24, the Army removed the brigade commander and three other officers of 13 Rashtriya Rifles. The Jammu and Kashmir police also registered an FIR against unknown persons under Section 302 of the Indian Penal Code for murder.

Union defence minister Rajnath Singh, accompanied by Lt. Governor Manoj Sinha and Chief of Army Staff General Manoj Pande, visited the Poonch sector to review the situation. During their visit, they also met with the families of the three deceased civilians and assuring them of speedy justice.

3. Tama Dora



Tama Dora:

- **Tama Dora, the Leader of the Koya Revolution**, was born in the **Koya Community of Odisha** and was killed by the **military police of Hyderabad** in 1872.
- His contributions include **revolutionary leadership** in 1870, where he led the **tribals of Malkangiri (Koraput District)**, especially the **Koya tribe**, against the **Raja of Koraput** and the **British**, including the **Poya Bahini**.
- He achieved a **notable victory** by defeating the **British Police of Malkangiri** and declared himself as the **Ruler of Podia and Motu**.
- In his **final conflict**, **Colonel Macqoid of Hyderabad** marched with forces but failed to confront the **Koya Army**.

Koya Tribe

- Koya are one of the few multi-racial and multi-lingual tribal communities in India.
- They live in the forests, plains, and valleys on both sides of the Godavari River, which lies in the central Indian state of Andhra Pradesh.
- Many also live in the states of Madhya Pradesh and Orissa.

- They believe their main deity still resides in a cave in the Bastar region.
- Language:
 - Most Koya speak either Gondi or Telugu, in addition to Koyi.
 - Koyi is closely related to Gondi and has been strongly influenced by Telugu.
- Occupation: Traditionally they are pastoralists and shifting cultivators but now-a-days, they have taken to settled cultivation supplemented by animal husbandry and seasonal forest collections.
- They erect menhirs in memory of the dead.
- Culture:
 - The Koyas adopted Bison horns to discover their two cultural forms: the Kommu Koya dance, during which two Bison horns are adorned on the head as part of the attire, and the Permakore flute, which is made of a single horn.
 - They have retained their rich and varied heritage of colourful dance and music which form an integral part of their festivals and rituals.
 - Many Koya deities are female, the most important being the "mother earth."

4. Konda Reddi Tribe



The **Konda Reddi** tribe, a **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTGs)** living along the **Godavari River** and hilly forests of **Andhra Pradesh**, has recently highlighted the **Indian laurel tree's** unique **water-releasing properties** in **Papikonda National Park**.

Konda Reddi Tribe:

- Recognized as a **Scheduled Tribe (ST)** in **Andhra Pradesh** and neighboring states like **Odisha** and **Tamil Nadu**, they speak **Telugu** and rely on **shifting cultivation** and the sale of **non-timber forest produce** such as **tamarind** and **adda leaves**. **Jowar** serves as their staple food.
- Their society, which is **patriarchal and patrilineal**, is governed by a **Kula Panchayat** and led by a hereditary headman known as '**Pedda Kapu**' in each village.
- The tribe also celebrates with the **Bison horn dance** during **festive and marriage occasions**.

- Konda Reddis is a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group inhabiting the banks of the river Godavari and also in the hilly forest tracts of Godavari and Khammam districts of Andhra Pradesh.
- Their mother tongue is Telugu in its purest and chaste form, with a unique accent.
- Subdivisions:
 - The Konda Reddy tribe is divided into exogamous septs for regulating matrimonial relations.
 - Like other Telugu-speaking people, their surnames are prefixed to individual names.
 - Generally, each sept is exogamous, but certain septs are considered as brother septs, and marriage alliances with brother septs (agnate relations) are prohibited.
- Family and Marriage:
 - The family is patriarchal and patrilocal. Monogamy is a rule, but polygamous families are also found.
 - Marriage by negotiations, by love and elopement, by service, by capture, and by exchange are socially accepted ways of acquiring mates.
- Religion: The primary religion practiced by the Konda Reddi is Folk Hinduism, characterized by local traditions and cults of local deities worshiped at the community level.
- Political Organization:
 - They have their own institution of social control called 'Kula Panchayat'.
 - Each village has a traditional headman called 'Pedda Kapu'.
 - The office of the headman is hereditary, and the headman is also the Pujari (priest) of the village deities.
- Livelihood:
 - They are primarily shifting cultivators and largely depend on flora and fauna of forest for their livelihood.
 - They collect and sell non timber forest produce like tamarind, adda leaves, myrobolan, broom sticks, etc., to supplement their meagre income.

- They cultivate largely jowar, which is their staple food.

5. Madhya Pradesh's tribal-dominated districts to get organic certificate soon



Forest Minister Nagar Singh Chauhan has directed officials concerned to complete all formalities for same. This certification would help tribal communities obtain better prices for their produce

Tribal-dominated districts of Madhya Pradesh would soon get organic certificates to promote export of minor forest produce. The certification works like a declaration stating the land is free from the effects of chemicals and suitable for organic farming.

Forest Minister Nagar Singh Chauhan has directed the officials concerned to complete all formalities for the same. This certification would help the tribal communities obtain better prices for their produce.

Madhya Pradesh has about 1.63 million hectares dedicated to organic farming, highest in the country. The state is also the country's largest producer of organic goods at 1.4 million tonnes. To encourage this, 1.73

million hectares in the state is certified 'organic', of which, 1.63 million hectares are certified by Agricultural & Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) and 93,000 hectares are certified by PGS.

The state has also declared a minimum support price (MSP) for 32 of the minor forest produce so that the producers get a fair price and collectors fetch remunerative prices as well. To increase the income of minor forest produce collectors, attention is also being given to processing. Additionally, under the Pradhan Mantri Van Vikas Yojana, the state government will be establishing 126 Van Dhan Kendras. Of these, 70 will also process products.

At present, 1.5 million families are involved in minor forest produce collection. Over 50 per cent belong to the tribal community. For them, a three-tier structure of cooperatives has been formulated. There are 10 primary forest producing cooperative societies formed at the primary level with 1.52 million collectors. On level two are 51 district unions followed by the Madhya Pradesh State Minor Forest Produce Federation at the apex.

6. Kol Tribe



'Kol Janjati Mahakumbh' organized on the occasion of Shabri Mata Janm Jayanti at Satna, Madhya Pradesh.

About Kol Tribe:

- The Kol tribes belonged to the **Proto-Australoid** ethnic stratum.
- They consider themselves to be the descendants of Sahara Mata, a member of the Savaras of epic fame; she is known as the "mother of the Kol."
- They are concentrated in the northern districts of **Madhya Pradesh** and small Kol populations are also found in Orissa and Maharashtra.
- The Kol speak local dialects of Hindi and use the **Devanagari script** for writing.
- They celebrate the **Jawara festival** which appears to be an ancient Kol agricultural festival that later acquired some Hindu characteristics.
- The name is derived from the juari plant, a type of millet. Jawara is held twice a year, in the fall just before the sowing of the winter crop, and in the spring after it has been harvested.

Kol Revolt/uprising?

- The Kols, tribal people from the Chhota Nagpur area, rose in revolt against the British in 1831.
- The rebel kols were under the leadership of Buddhu Bhagat, Joa Bhagat, Jhindrai Manki, Madara Mahato fought against British rules.

7. The Resilient And Enduring 'Banjara Tribe' In Telangana



Their history may not be found in books, their art and culture may not be framed or described anywhere, but the Banjaras are a unique tribe that has imbibed into their tradition something from every part of the country. KhabarLive speaks to Banjaras of Hyderabad to get an insight into their culture.

When the word 'Banjara' comes up in any conversation, the image it conjures up in one's mind is that of a woman with heavy metal jewellery, armful of ivory bangles, and clothes embellished with tiny pieces of mirrors. Today, the Banjara tribe may live on the fringes of society, but, historically, they played a very important role everywhere they went. In a country with a diverse cultural heritage, the Banjaras are

best known for their migration from one place to another in search of trade.

Historical records are not very clear as to the origin of the race, but typically, Lambadi-Banjaras are a strong and virile race with tall stature, oval face, black and brown eyes, long silky hair, straight nose and fair complexion. The men and women are strong, muscular and hard-working, and are blessed with a lot of endurance.

Unfortunately, owing to their nomadic tendency, there is no written record as to how the tribe migrated down South. However, there are facts which, to some extent, give us some idea on the origin and occupation of Banjaras. The three appellations – Lambadi, Sugali and Banjari are derived from Lam (Luskar, army) or Lavana (salt), su-gwala (good-cowherd) and Banjar (traders) respectively.

About the origin of this people, GA Grierson mentions in 'Linguistic Survey of India, Volume-IX' that "The tribe has been known in India from centuries. It appeared to be a mixed race and its origin and organisation maybe due to the wars of the Delhi emperors in Southern India, where they carried the commissariat of the armies."

"Usually nomadic in nature, the tribes of Rajasthan are called Banjaras, they migrated and settled in this locality. Since the area was a hilly one, it became known as Banjara Hills. While there is no evidence in the history that Banjarans served Qutb Shahi kings, one of the gates of Golconda was given the name 'Banjara Darwaza'.

The local terminology could have influenced the Qutb Shahis," says Anand Raj Varma, a historian. Theories abound about how they came to Hyderabad, among them being this one.

Moving from one place to another also had a trickle-down effect on the language spoken by the tribe. Banjaran language known as Goar boli is a confluence of Sanskrit, Hindi, Marwari, Gujarati, and bears the influence of the regional language of the place where they stay. For

example, members adopt a few words from the Telangana dialect in their speech, if they don't have that particular word in their language.

A language which doesn't have a script is considered as an under-developed language. Since Goar boli lacks a script, their literature, songs, and culture have been carried forward orally from generations. Debate continues over whether the tribe should have one common language as their script. But, logistically speaking, it is a tricky situation.

"They could have developed their literature if they lived together. But, due to their spreading all over, they were not able to develop their script and hence the adherence to keeping their existing literature alive orally. I personally feel Devanagari script should become our script, since it is easy for most of us to read and understand," says Dr Surya Dhanunjay, Head of Department, Telugu, Osmania University.

Banjara women's attire is very fancy, colourful and attractive. One can identify them from a far distance due to this. Their jewellery is made out of silver; in case they lack the funds to buy silver, they make their jewellery with rupayi billalu (coins), steel and other metals. The only gold accessory they have is the nose pin.

A typical Banjara woman wears a dress made up of three pieces - Phetiya, kaali, tukri commonly known as ghagra (skirt), blouse (top) and dupatta. The dazzling mirrors synonymous with their attractive clothes also have a logical reason behind them. They acted as reflectors to animals and were used to scare them away when the men were away. Women use tattoos as embellishment, but for Banjaras, tattoos are compulsory and they believe in it for various reasons. "We believe that tattoos help us escape from an evil eye; they also help us in identifying people from our community. There is a belief that one has to take something from the earth after death; so, we get a dotted tattoo done on our face, below the chin, and beside the eyes in keeping with that," adds Saalamma.

“There are many in the industry who does not like to reveal their caste until and unless they are successful, but, in my case, the caste gave me a career and recognition. Today, if people recognise me, it’s only because of my costume. Even in events, they expect me to be dressed in Lambada attire; otherwise, I’m nobody for them,” says anchor and singer Mangli.

Banjara art is rich and includes performance arts such as dance, music, folk and plastic arts like rangoli, textile embroidery, tattooing and painting. However, it is their embroidery and tattooing which form a significant aspect of the Banjara identity.

Lambadi women specialise in Lepo embroidery which involves stitching pieces of mirror, decorative beads and coins onto the clothes. The Sandur Lambani embroidery is a type of textile embroidery unique to the tribe in Sanduru, Bellary district, Karnataka, which has a GI tag.

Banjaras are hardcore meat lovers. They enjoy eating their traditional dish, Solloai, which is prepared on most of their festivals. Solloai is a dish made with goat blood and other parts of goat. Their staple diet is bati (roti), jowari roti, rice, jonna gatka, dalia with sambar. Banjaras also enjoy homemade traditional liquor. Among their favourites is Ippa puvvu saara, which is mostly served on special occasions. However, today the traditional liquor has been replaced by store-bought whisky.

While there has been a constant increase in the population of Banjara tribe, there is a huge difference in the numbers of male and female.

Banjara festivals are nature-based. They rejoice in the crop yield and celebrate the occasion as a festival. A nine-day festival, Teej, is one such celebration where all the young girls along with women of the community come together and take active part in the festivities. Teej is similar to Bathukamma which is celebrated by planting saplings of wheat instead of flowers. Otherwise, they celebrate all Hindu festivals. They look up to Lord Ram and greet others with ‘Ram Ram’. They worship Santh Sevalal Maharaj and all other Hindu gods.

There is also a culture of marrying husband's younger brother, if the husband dies. Purna Chander Badawath, a documentary filmmaker, says, "It is believed that after the husband's death, if the woman marries some other man, she won't be accorded with the same respect. She will be seen as the second wife there and her children will be left alone. To prevent all this, they created a rule that a widow marries the younger brother to keep the children safe. The woman need not go to another family and lose her self-respect."

Traditionally, joint family is the norm among Lambadas, but now it is breaking down gradually into nuclear families.

Reservations were given according to profession and status of the tribal people. In Rajasthan, Banjaras are considered as OC, Karnataka SC, Maharashtra BC and Telangana STs. "The inclusion of the Lambadas in the list of Scheduled Tribes in 1976 was done under an order of the State government issued in the then composite Andhra Pradesh," says Purna Chander.

Banjaras celebrate the birth of a child by singing and dancing on the occasion. After the birth of the child, the mother and her baby are considered to be impure. Hence after five days, the mother and child take a purification bath. The house is also purified with water and cow dung. After the purification ceremony, the mother and the child visit the shrine of the family deity and then take blessings from the elders of their community.

On death in a family too, the body is shifted to thanda only for performing the necessary rituals. Most still practise and ensure the final rites happen within the community in the thanda and close to water bodies, and not in other places.

Among the Banjaras, it is customary to bury an unmarried person and burn the married ones. Earlier, they used to burn the bodies unclothed, but, today, they are following the Hindu tradition. Even they consider that death causes impurities; hence, purification rituals are conducted

on the tenth day. After the death, all clothes and houses are washed. The male members shave their heads, beard and moustache. Thereafter, a purification feast is organised among the community members.

8. Jenu Kuruba



This newscard is an excerpt from an articles which delves into the historical and social context of the Jenu Kuruba community, including their displacement from their traditional lands in the Western Ghats due to conservation efforts.

Jenu Kuruba

- The Jenu Kuruba tribe, *numbering around 37,000*, resides primarily in the **Nilgiris region**, bordering Kerala and Karnataka.
- Their traditional occupation involves **collecting honey** in the forest, reflected in their name where '*Jenu*' means '*honey*' in *Kannada*.
- In the early 20th century, they **lived in forest huts** and engaged in cultivation.

Social organization of Jenu Kurubas'

- They speak the **Jenu Kurumba language**, which is *related to Kodava* or considered a rural dialect of Kannada.
- Historically, they engaged in activities like **food gathering, collecting minor forest produce**, and handling elephants.
- They typically **reside in small settlements** known as *Hadi* and practice shifting cultivation.
- Social organization within the community is *semi-nomadic*, with decentralized authority **led by a head-man (yajamana)** and a **ritual head or shaman (gudda)**.

Their rehabilitation

- The tribe has fought for their **rights to live in reserved forests**, most recently in 2020 under the Forest Rights Act.
- In 2021, protests continued against the forest department for promoting eco-tourism and safaris, which are deemed illegal under Indian and international laws.
- From the 1970s onwards, many Jenu Kurubas have been **evicted from their homes** due to conservation efforts in tiger reserves like **Nagarhole and Bandipur**.
- Those **relocated outside the forest** often work as daily wagers, agricultural laborers, or on coffee estates in Kodagu.

9. Changpa Tribes

Changpa Tribes are losing their land due to corporates in Ladakh.

About Changpa Tribes:

- The Changpa Tribes, with their Tibetan roots, inhabit **Eastern Ladakh**.
- These communities lead a **semi-nomadic lifestyle**, moving between different areas based on their needs.

Livelihood:

- The main source of income for the **Changpa Tribes** is **pastoralism**.
- They primarily rear **Changra goats**, known for their precious Pashmina fibre, and yaks, which are central to their way of life.

Housing:

- Their traditional homes are called **Reboo**, unique conical tents crafted from yak skin, representing their rich cultural heritage.

Cultural Identity:

- The Changpa people practice **Tibetan Buddhism** and speak **Changskhat**, a dialect of Tibetan, showcasing their deep cultural roots.

Lifestyle Variations:

There are two distinct groups within the Changpa community:

- The **Phalpa** are nomadic, traveling with their herds between the Hanley Valley and Lato areas.
- The **Fangpa**, in contrast, are sedentary and live in six isolated settlements in Hanley.

Community Bonds:

- There is a strong sense of community among the Changpa, with intermarriage being common between the **Phalpa** and **Fangpa** groups.

10. Bohag Bihu



Bohag Bihu, a festival in Assam was celebrated recently on April 14, 2024.

About Bohag Bihu:

- Bohag Bihu, also known as **Rongali Bihu** or **Xaat Bihu**, is a significant **cultural festival** celebrated in the **northeastern state of Assam** and **other regions of northeastern India**.
 - The term “**Rong**” in Rongali Bihu translates to **joy** in Assamese, and this festival embodies the spirit of joy and happiness.
- It is observed by the **indigenous ethnic groups of Assam** and marks the **beginning of the Assamese New Year**.
- It coincides with the **first day of the Hindu solar calendar** and **spring officially begins on this day**.
- **Bihu is a tri-annual festival**, with **Bohag Bihu** being the **first of the three**.
- It is celebrated in the **second week of April**, signifying the **onset of the seeding season**.
- The other two Bihu festivals, **Kati Bihu** and **Magh Bihu** are celebrated in **October** and **January**, respectively.

- The Bhogali Bihu (Magh Bihu) is a **harvest festival**, with community feasts.
- The Kongali Bihu (Kati Bihu) is the **sombre, thrifty one reflecting a season of short supplies and is an animistic festival.**

Celebration:

- This festival is celebrated for seven days.
- The first day of the festival is called **Goru Bihu**, which means "cow worship".
- The other days of the festival are **Manuh Bihu, Guxai Bihu, Chot, Kutum, Mela, Raati, and Senehi.**

Similar spring harvest festivals celebrated across India:

- While Bohag Bihu holds special significance in Assam, similar spring harvest festivals are celebrated across India, showcasing the country's rich cultural diversity.
- In Punjab, it is called **Baisakhi**, in Tamil Nadu as **Puthandu**, in Kerala as **Vishu**, and in West Bengal as **Pohela Baisakh.**

11. Gutti Koya Tribe

Stone memorials erected in village Ramachandrapuram, inside forest on A.P.-Chhattisgarh border by people of Gutti Koya Tribe.

It is erected to give tribute to three most important dignitaries - physician, priest and village leader and in this way tribal people express their gratitude for their services.

These **community servants served the tribal people in Ramachandrapuram village which is situated in Kunavaram Mandal of Alluri Sitarama Raju District.**

Other Details

□ **The village Ramachandrapuram is inhabited by 40 families of Gutti Koya tribe.**

□ **During 2005-11, following a series of clashes between Salwa Judum and Naxalites, these families migrated here from Dantewara district in Chhattisgarh. Dantewara district falls in Left Wing Extremist active region, also known as red corridor. Only 3 people Vejji (physician), poojari (priest) and the community head are buried, rest are cremated.**

Process After death of any of these persons, a stone of the size of the deceased person is searched. Then it is kept in forest in the memory of the person. When the memorial is installed, a feast is organized by the family of deceased. Thing like a knife, a sickle, Mahua liquor, which were dear to the deceased, are placed under stone memorial.

Gutti Koya Tribe

□ **It is a tribal community which is spread in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Chhattisgarh, and Odisha. Their livelihood sources are animal husbandry and minor forest produce. They appoint only males to the position of physician, priest and village leader. Earlier this tribe was in news when some people of this tribe killed a forest range officer in Telangana.**

About the Koya Tribe:

□ **Koya are one of the few multi-racial and multi-lingual tribal communities in India. They live in the forests, plains, and valleys on both sides of the Godavari River, which lies in Andhra Pradesh.**

- Many also live in the states of Madhya Pradesh and Orissa.
- They believe their main deity still resides in a cave in the **Bastar region**.

Language:

- o Most Koya speak either Gondi or Telugu, in addition to Koyi.
- o Koyi is closely related to Gondi and has been strongly influenced by Telugu.
- **Occupation:** Traditionally they are pastoralists and shifting cultivators but now-a-days, they have taken to settled cultivation supplemented by animal husbandry and seasonal forest collections.
- They erect **menhirs** in memory of the dead.

Culture:

- o The Koyas adopted Bison horns to discover their two cultural forms: the **Kommu Koya dance**, during which two Bison horns are adorned on the head as part of the attire, and the **Permakore flute**, which is made of a single horn. They have retained their rich and varied heritage of colourful dance and music which form an integral part of their festivals and rituals. Many Koya deities are female, the most important being the "**mother earth**."

12. Warli Tribe in Suburban Mumbai Fear Displacement Due to Shivaji Museum: Report



Members of the Warli tribal community in suburban Mumbai's Gorai village are worried about the Shivaji museum project announced by the Maharashtra government, as it may involve the destruction of their homes, The Hindu has reported.

The Maharashtra Department of Tourism announced the construction of the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj War Art Museum across 136 acres of land in Gorai in June last year. A budget of Rs 50 crore was set aside for the project. According to The Hindu, the boundary wall of the museum has been constructed - and that has already led to the demolition of some homes.

"Since the Shivaji museum project was announced [in mid-2023], there have been several visits by Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC) staff along with police," Kusum Kisan Babar, who lives in Gorai's Babar Pada tribal hamlet, told the newspaper. "There is the constant fear of losing the land my ancestors left us."

The community says that the land set aside for the project has been with them for generations, and they are dependent on it. "We have no

objection to the museum, but it should not be built on our land,” Asmita Kolekar from Birsa Munda Pada told The Hindu.

The community is reportedly in the process of filing a petition in the Bombay high court against the takeover of their land. Earlier in 2011, the same court had rejected MTDC’s tourism proposal to construct hotels and resorts in and around Gorai and Manori villages, as these areas are ecologically sensitive.

Rajendra Bhosale, collector, Mumbai Suburban, told The Hindu, “If tribal communities are practising agriculture on sanctioned land, they will not be displaced or affected by such projects. ...Even if that particular place is affected, they will be rehabilitated safely.”

At the time when the project was announced, Maharashtra tourism minister Mangal Prabhat Lodha had said that “encroachments” on government land were being removed. “Encroachment on the site of Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation in Gorai has been removed today. A war museum will be set up at the plot where the war skills and armor of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj will be displayed so that future generations can experience the glorious history of Chhatrapati Shivaji and take inspiration from it,” he said in June 2023.

About Warli Tribe

- They are an indigenous adivasi group that inhabits the bordering, hilly, and coastal areas of Gujarat and Maharashtra.
- The word "Warla," which meaning "piece of land," is the root of the term "Warli."
- **Language:** Varli, sometimes known as Warli, is an Indo-Aryan language spoken by the Warli people. Although the language is commonly categorised as Marathi, it is also referred to as Bhil or Konkani.
- **Culture:** They have embraced many Hindu ideas and have their own animistic beliefs, way of life, rituals, and traditions.

- The idea of Mother Nature is central to Warli culture, and natural objects are often shown as main points in Warli paintings.
- **Fashion and attire:** The ladies of the Warli Tribe often don a one-yard sari called a Lugden, which is worn until the knee.
- The sari was influenced by the rural areas of Maharashtra. The drape is knee length and has a Maharashtrian sari draping feel to it.
- **Celebration:** The Warli tribes celebrate Bohada, a three-day mask celebration. The proprietors of these masks don them and give multiple performances during this festivity.
- Tarpa dance and music are performed by the Warli Tribes, who also play Tarpa instruments.
- Typically, they give group performances. With a Tarpa instrument in hand, one person begins to play music, and the others surround him or her, dancing as they dance.

13. Shompen Tribe Of Andaman & Nicobar Islands Cast Vote For First Time

For the first time, members of the **Shompen tribe**, one of the **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)** in India took part in the election process by casting their votes in the Andaman and Nicobar Lok Sabha constituency. According to the provisional figures made available, the **voter turnout was 63.99%**.

o However, in **2019**, the voter turnout was **65.09%**

Shompen Tribe

□ **Shompen Tribe Belongs to:** These are the **indigenous people of the interior of Great Nicobar Island**. They are **designated as a PVTG** within the list of Scheduled Tribes.

Characteristics:

- o Shompen Tribe are **one of the most isolated tribes**.
- o They are **semi-nomadic hunter-gatherers**.
- Their **main sources of livelihood** are hunting, gathering, fishing, and a little bit of horticultural activities in a rudimentary form.

- **Population:** The estimated population of Shompen Tribe was **229 as per the 2011 Census data**.
- **Language Known:** They speak their own language, which has **many dialects**. Members of one band do not understand the dialect of the other.
- **Social structure:** The family is controlled by the **eldest male member**, who controls all activities of the women and kids.
- o **Monogamy** is the general rule, although **polygamy is allowed too**.

Others:

- o The Shompen habitat is also **an important biological hotspot** and there are two National Parks and one Biosphere Reserve namely:

Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)

- **About:** These groups are among the **most vulnerable sections** of India as they are few in numbers.
- o **75 such groups have been identified** and categorised as PVTGs.
- Among the 75 listed PVTG's the **highest number are found in Odisha**.
- **Characteristics:** There are certain tribal communities who have:
 - o **Declining or stagnant population**
 - o Low level of literacy
 - o **Pre-agricultural level of technology**
 - o Economically backward
- **Others:** In **1973, the Dhebar Commission** created Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) as a separate category, which are less developed among

the tribal groups. In 2006, the Government of India renamed the PTGs as PVTGs.

14. Empower the guardians of the earth, do not rob them



- In the **southern region** of the **Andaman and Nicobar archipelago**, there are **seven small islands** near **Little Nicobar**, labeled as **“uninhabited”** by government records but essential to the **local indigenous Payuh people**.

Details:

- The **islands, Meroë and Menchal**—locally known as **Piruii** and **Pingaeyak**—are traditionally owned and used by the **southern Nicobarese indigenous communities**.
- These **islands** serve as **crucial resource reservoirs**, with their use and **conservation** deeply embedded in **spiritual beliefs**.

Conservation colonialism:

- In May 2022, the **Andaman and Nicobar (A&N) administration** announced plans to establish **three wildlife sanctuaries** on **Meroë Island, Menchal Island, and Little Nicobar Island**, disregarding **indigenous land ownership and management systems**.
- Despite the presence of approximately **1,200 southern Nicobarese** who inhabit and hold **traditional rights over these islands**, the administration claimed it received **no objections to the sanctuaries**, stating that **no individual rights existed within the proposed sanctuary boundaries** and restricting local access to these areas in the name of national interest.
- This move exemplifies what is often criticized as **“conservation colonialism,”** where conservation efforts are imposed without **adequate consultation or consideration of the indigenous peoples’ rights and traditional practices**.

Masking an ecological disaster:

- The **decision to designate Meroë and Menchal Islands as conservation reserves** has been **criticized as arbitrary**, with **limited ecological justification** concerning the actual populations of **Megapode birds on Menchal and coral diversity on Meroë**.
- This move coincides with controversy surrounding the **denotification of the Galathea Bay Wildlife Sanctuary** for a massive **₹72,000-crore development project** on Great Nicobar, a **UNESCO Biosphere Reserve**.
- **Megapod birds:**
 - Also known as incubator birds or mound-builders.
 - They are **stocky, medium-large, chicken-like birds** with **small heads and large feet** in the family **Megapodiidae**.
 - All are browsers, and all except the malleefowl occupy wooded habitats.
 - **They are of three kinds:** scrub fowl, brush turkeys, and mallee fowl or lowan.
 - They are found in the broader **Australasian region**, including islands in the **western Pacific, Australia, New Guinea, and**

the **islands of Indonesia** east of the **Wallace Line**, but also the **Andaman and Nicobar Islands** in the **Bay of Bengal**.

Earth's guardians:

- Globally, **indigenous peoples**, who make up about **6% of the world's population** and **steward lands** that hold **80% of the planet's biodiversity**, are often **evicted from their ancestral territories** under various pretexts like **development and conservation**.
- These territories encompass approximately **22% of the Earth's land surface**.
- **Indigenous communities** are recognized as the **original guardians of the Earth**, possessing **crucial knowledge and practices** for sustainable living.

15. The Forest Fighters: The tale of primitive Baiga tribe in Madhya Pradesh village



The primitive Baiga tribe in Pondi village of Dindori district has scripted an inspiring story of saving forests and becoming self-sufficient. Explores Anuraag Singh

Counted among one of the particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PVTGs), the primitive Baiga tribe in Pondi village of Dindori district has scripted an inspiring tale of saving forests and becoming self-sufficient in 16 years. Led by a Class IV school dropout, 40-year-old woman Ujyaro Bai Kevatiya, the movement has seen 110 Baiga tribe families save and rejuvenate 1,500 hectares of forests.

The save jungles movement, which started in Pondi village in 2006, has also helped in the conservation and rejuvenation of the entire biodiversity, including 43 leafy vegetables, 13 types of mushrooms, 18 forms of tuber plants, 24 fruit varieties, 29 non-timber forest products and 26 rare and valuable herbal species.

“Many animal species, ranging from birds to rats, and ants to snakes too have been conserved by the movement. Before 2004, the visibility in

these jungles due to depleted forest cover was around 50-100 meters, but the 16-years-long movement has reduced the visibility to just around 10 meters,” National Institute of Women, Child and Youth Development Dindori district (NIWCYD) coordinator Balwant Rahangdale said.

The story started in 2004, while NIWCYD-associated people started working on water conservation in the area, but during the intensive study, it was found that jungle depletion was the reason behind all problems. Subsequently, in 2006, Ujyaro Bai along with 12 other residents of Pondi village joined forces with the Nagpur headquartered NGO to start the movement to save the jungles.

“But the start of the movement began with resistance, including from my husband Phool Singh. He asked me to stay away from any movement and just focus on family life by taking care of two daughters and one son. With much effort, I was able to convince him. After great efforts, we were also able to get support from other Baiga tribal families too. The actual movement on the ground gained momentum by 2010,” Ujyaro Bai said.

Three strict rules were framed by the crusaders, including staying away from cutting green trees, not allowing outsiders to indulge in cutting trees and preventing forest fires in a proactive manner. The efforts, gradually, started paying results and the forest cover started rejuvenating

“We also started celebrating Raksha Bandhan festival in the jungles. The trees became our brothers and women tied Rakhis on them. Other religious rituals, including Parikrama of the forest too, were started to ensure that saving forests became the foremost duty of Pondi village residents,” she added.

A novel exercise was to form a Biodiversity Register of the 1,500-hectare forest area. It contained every minute detail about the biodiversity, spanning from plant species to animal species. “Today, if you ask any

kid in the village about Biodiversity in our jungle, the kid will immediately reply not only about every plant species, but also about birds and other animal species," said two other Pondi village residents, Mangu Baiga and Sonkali Bai.

NIWCYD district coordinator Rahangdale said that the rejuvenation of the all-season twin waterfalls has made the entire village water self-sufficient through pipelines funded by WaterAid. Further, using retrofitting efforts, the toilets in the village to have been made functional again, ultimately making the village open defecation free.

16. Article 244(A) of the Constitution

In Assam's tribal-majority Diphu Lok Sabha constituency election candidates from all parties have pledged to implement Article 244(A) of the Constitution to establish an autonomous "state within a state."

Article 244(A) of the Constitution

- **Article 244(A) was introduced by The Constitution (Twenty-second Amendment) Act, 1969, granting Parliament the authority to enact legislation to establish an autonomous state within Assam, encompassing specified tribal areas, including Karbi Anglong.**
- **This autonomous state would have its own Legislature or Council of Ministers or both.**
- **Article 244(A) offers more autonomy than the Sixth Schedule as it potentially allows for self-governance with broader legislative and administrative powers, including law and order.**
 - **Autonomous councils under the Sixth Schedule offer decentralized governance in tribal areas through elected representatives.**
 - **However, their legislative, law enforcement, and financial powers are limited.**

Diphu Lok Sabha Constituency:

- Diphu is located in Assam and is the **least populated among Assam's 14 Lok Sabha** constituencies with approximately 8.9 lakh voters.
- This constituency is **reserved for Scheduled Tribes** and spans across six legislative assembly segments in the tribal-majority hill districts of **Karbi Anglong, West Karbi Anglong, and Dima Hasao.**

Administrative Framework:

- **Governed under the Sixth Schedule** of the **Constitution**, which allows for the administration of tribal areas in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram through autonomous councils.
- The area is **managed by two autonomous councils**: the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council and the North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council.

Community Profile:

- Diverse ethnic groups including Karbi, Dimasa, Hmar, Kuki, Rengma Naga, Zeme Naga, Bodo, Garo, and others.