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PAPER - 1

PHYSICAL & ARCHAEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

1. Epigenetics

(Use this content in the topic of syllabus – Unit 9.1 Paper I)

- Epigenetics is the study of how cells control gene activity without changing the DNA sequence. “Epi-“means on or above in Greek, and “epigenetic” describes factors beyond the genetic code. Epigenetic changes are modifications to DNA that regulate whether genes are turned on or off.
- These Epigenetic modifications are attached to DNA and do not change the sequence of DNA building blocks. Within the complete set of DNA in a cell (the genome), all of the modifications that regulate the activity (expression) of the genes is known as the epigenome.
- Because epigenetic changes help determine whether genes are turned on or off, they influence the production of proteins in cells. This regulation helps ensure that each cell produces only proteins that are necessary for its function. For example, proteins that promote bone growth are not produced in muscle cells.
- Patterns of epigenetic modification vary among individuals, in different tissues within an individual, and even in different cells within a tissue. Environmental influences, such as a person’s diet and exposure to pollutants, can impact the epigenome.
- Epigenetic modifications can be maintained from cell to cell as cells divide and, in some cases, can be inherited through the generations. Errors in the epigenetic process, such as modification of the wrong gene or failure to add a chemical group to a particular gene or histone, can lead to abnormal gene activity or inactivity.
- Altered gene activity, including that caused by epigenetic errors, is a common cause of genetic disorders. Conditions such as cancers, metabolic disorders, and degenerative disorders have been found to be related to epigenetic errors.

2. What is Junk DNA?

(Use this content in the topic of syllabus – Unit 9.1 Paper I)

- In genetics, the term junk DNA refers to regions of DNA that are noncoding.

About Junk DNA:

- In genetics, the term junk DNA refers to regions of DNA that are noncoding.
- DNA contains instructions (coding) that are used to create proteins in the cell.
- However, the amount of DNA contained inside each cell is vast, and not all of the genetic sequences present within a DNA molecule actually code for a protein.
- Some of this noncoding DNA is used to produce non-coding RNA components such as transfer RNA, regulatory RNA and ribosomal RNA.
- However, other DNA regions are not transcribed into proteins, nor are they used to produce RNA molecules, and their function is unknown. These are known as junk regions of DNA.
- The proportion of coding versus noncoding DNA varies significantly between species.
- In the human genome, for example, almost all (98%) of the DNA is noncoding, while in bacteria, only 2% of the genetic material does not code for anything.
- However, over the years, researchers have found evidence to suggest that junk DNA may provide some form of functional activity.
- Some lines of evidence suggest that fragments of what were originally non-functional DNA have undergone the process of exaptation throughout evolution. Exaptation refers to the acquisition of a function through means other than natural selection.

3. Nature as a Legal Person and Indigenous Animism

(Use this content in the topic of syllabus – Unit 5 Paper I)

- This bridges **Animism and Sacred Complexities** with modern jurisprudence. It can be directly used to support Edward Tylor's concept of Animism, demonstrating how indigenous worldviews (treating natural entities as living, conscious beings) are being integrated into formal, post-modern legal framework
- The Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court has declared **Tamil Nadu's Tamirabharani river a deity**, thereby granting it legal personhood to curb pollution from funeral rites and waste dumping.
- **About**
- In **2017**, the Uttarakhand High Court recognised the **Ganga and Yamuna** as legal persons. However, the Supreme Court later stayed the order, citing **practical and administrative difficulties**, particularly since the rivers flow across multiple states.
- Globally, **New Zealand's Whanganui River** became the **first river** in the world to be recognised as a legal person in 2017.
- **Tamirabharani River**
- The **Thamirabarani or Tamraparni or Porunai** is a perennial river that originates from the **Agastyarkoodam peak** of Pothigai hills of the Western Ghats.
- It flows through the Tirunelveli and Thoothukudi districts of **Tamil Nadu** in southern India before draining into the **Gulf of Mannar**.
- It was called the Tamraparni River in the pre-classical period, a name it lent to the island of Sri Lanka.

4. Route of Human Migration

(Use this content in the topic of syllabus – Unit 1.4 Paper I)

- Scientists have established that **Homo sapiens evolved in Africa and later migrated to various parts of the world**. The routes and timing of these migrations are still debatable among the scientists. The **coastal dispersion theory** suggests migration along coastlines, though it lacks strong archaeological evidence.

Route of Human Migration

- **Genetic studies** have provided **insights into human evolution and migration patterns**. By analyzing **mitochondrial DNA mutations**, scientists confirmed that Homo sapiens evolved in Africa over millennia before migrating globally. While scientists widely accept the **out-of-Africa theory**, they differ on the timing and routes of migration.
- **Two Theories of Dispersion: Coastal Dispersion Theory:** Studies suggest **humans migrated along coasts**, benefiting from **warm climates, abundant food, and tropical conditions**.
- **Challenges to the Theory:** Archeological evidence in India **contradicts** this model. **Inland Palaeolithic sites** dominate, with **no archeological traces along the Indian Ocean coastline** to support coastal dispersion.
- **Saurashtra Peninsula Study:** Recent research analysed **Middle Palaeolithic tools** in the **Bhadar and Aji river basins of Gujarat**. Using relative dating methods, the **tools** were found to be **56,000–48,000 years old, indicating inland migration**. Middle Palaeolithic tools revealed advanced flaking techniques, contrasting with sharper blade tools of the **Late Palaeolithic**. Studies suggest Saurashtra was connected to **Kutch, Makran, and the Western Ghats during the Middle Palaeolithic**, indicating the region was farther from the coast. **No evidence of marine resource dependence** (e.g., fish, shellfish) was found, further supporting inland migration.

Conclusion

- The **study offers new data but** emphasizes the need for precise dating. Evidence challenges purely coastal migration theories but **requires careful interpretation due to submerged sites and**

undated regions. The study also highlights broader dispersal in Saurashtra, covering coastal, hinterland, and inland areas, **suggesting a multifaceted migration pattern.** This detailed analysis of inland vs. coastal migration patterns continues to evolve, emphasizing the need for integrating genetic and archeological findings.

5. Neanderthals and Modern Humans Interbred for Over 200,000 Years, Gene Study Confirms

(Use this content in the topic of syllabus – Unit 1.6 Paper I)

Timeline & Frequency

- 250,000-year window: Interbreeding occurred repeatedly over a quarter-million years rather than during a single, brief historical event. Three distinct waves: Major genetic exchanges happened roughly 250,000, 120,000, and 50,000 years ago. Early human exodus: The earliest interbreeding shows *Homo sapiens* left Africa much earlier than previously thought.

Genetic Legacy

- Modern DNA footprint: Non-African humans today carry 1% to 2% Neanderthal DNA due to this ancient mixing. Ghost lineages: Some modern populations also carry DNA from Denisovans, another archaic human cousin that interbred with us. Neanderthal extinction absorption: Regular interbreeding suggests Neanderthals may have been physically absorbed into the larger *Homo sapiens* population.

Biological Impact

- Sex-biased mating: Genetic data reveals interbreeding occurred predominantly between Neanderthal males and modern human females.
- Immune system boost: Introgressed Neanderthal genes helped

early *Homo sapiens* fight off unfamiliar Eurasian viruses and diseases. Modern health traits: Retained Neanderthal DNA still influences modern human skin pigmentation, sleep patterns, and Covid-19 severity. Advanced mapping tools: These insights are driven by new AI software capable of filtering out modern contamination from ancient bones.

6. Why do men and women walk differently? A Neanderthal pelvis from 35,000 years ago, when Neanderthals still coexisted with modern humans

(Use this content in the topic of syllabus – Unit 1.5 Paper I)

Core Discovery: Shift in Evolutionary Narrative : **Traditional Assumption Reversed:** Scientists long believed the modern human pelvis was the default template and the broad Neanderthal pelvis was an evolutionary anomaly requiring explanation. **The New Reality:** The study proves the Neanderthal pelvis represents the original "ancestral template," while the **modern human male pelvis is the true evolutionary outlier.**

Surprising Gender Resemblance : **Fossil Analysis:** Researchers compared two exceptionally well-preserved male Neanderthal pelvises—one from Kebara Cave (Israel) and one from Sima de los Huesos (Spain)—against modern human anatomy. **Statistical Shock:** An algorithm blind to species sorted the male Neanderthal pelvises as *female* with **over 99% confidence**. Despite their robust builds, male Neanderthals shared proportions almost identical to modern human women, not modern men.

The Biomechanical Hip Socket Shift : **Forward Movement:** The defining anatomical difference lies in the position of the hip sockets (*acetabula*). **The "Tweak":** In modern human males, the hip joints shifted roughly an inch (2.6 cm) **farther forward on the pelvic ring** compared to both Neanderthals and modern women

The "Natural Spring" Mechanism : Energy Storage: Moving the hip socket forward creates a specialized mechanical layout. **Spring Action:** This shift allows the anterior thigh muscles at the front of the pelvis to act like a natural spring, while the body weight bears down on the back.

Shock Absorption and Long-Distance Efficiency

- **Centres of Mass:** Every bipedal step causes the body's center of mass to drop, creating a jarring impact on joints.
- **The Advantage:** Modern men's unique geometry softens this downward drop, stores the impact as potential energy, and releases it to **"spring" the body into the next step**, lowering energy expenditure for long-distance walking.
- **Medical and Clinical Significance :Modern Applications:** This breakthrough goes beyond basic anthropology.**Healthcare Impact:** Mapping these overlooked geometric relationships allows modern researchers to significantly advance fields like **musculoskeletal medicine, biomechanics, physical rehabilitation, and gender-specific injury prevention**

PAPER - 2

INDIAN & TRIBAL ANTHROPOLOGY

1. Tribal Development and Cultural Preservation

(Use this content in the topic of syllabus – Unit 7.2 Paper II)

- Defining Development Divergence : Traditional economic metrics like GDP and industrialization often clash with tribal worldviews, which define progress through ecological balance and community self-sufficiency.
 - The Threat of Eco-Displacement : Extracting resources from ancestral lands forces tribes into urban environments, separating them from their traditional livelihoods and fracturing their social structures.
 - Psychological and Cultural Assimilation : Displacement strips tribes of their sacred geography, which rapidly erodes their oral traditions, spiritual rituals, and unique cultural identity.
 - The Power of Legal Self-Determination : Frameworks like India's Forest Rights Act (FRA) and PESA Act empower village councils (*Gram Sabhas*) to legally veto external projects that threaten their habitat.
 - The Concept of Ethno-Development : Successful programs implement "ethno-development," an approach that builds public infrastructure, healthcare, and literacy around existing tribal values rather than replacing them.
 - Preserving Language in Education : Imposing dominant languages in schools causes cultural alienation; effective policies use mother-tongue-based multilingual education to improve literacy safely.
- Monetising Without Exploiting
- Governments can boost tribal income by supporting indigenous enterprises—like organic millet farming and handicraft cooperatives—without exposing them to predatory market forces.

- The Flaw of Top-Down Bureaucracy : Development packages designed by urban policymakers usually fail because they ignore specific tribal customs, seasonal migrations, and local ecological realities.
- The Rights of Nature Connection Tribal resistance, like the Dongria Kondh's defense of the Niyamgiri Hills, : highlights how indigenous land rights directly protect critical biodiversity hotspots.
- The Principle of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) :Genuine tribal development requires international FPIC standards, ensuring communities have the absolute right to reject or alter state-sponsored projects.

2. Timeline of Nicobarese migration to the Nicobar Islands

(Use this content in the topic of syllabus – Unit 6.1 Paper II)

- Key Findings of the Study on Nicobarese Tribe Revised Migration Timeline: Previous studies estimated that the Austroasiatic ancestors of the Nicobarese arrived to Nicobar Islands over 11,000 years ago.
- The new study, using advanced Deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) analysis, corrected this estimate to approximately 5,000 years ago. Genetic Link: The study found that the Nicobarese share ancestral ties with the Htin Mal community(ethnic group native to Laos-Thailand region).
- This supports the idea that their ancestors migrated from Southeast Asia, rather than South Asia.
- Preservation of Genetic Identity: Due to their geographical isolation, the Nicobarese have maintained their genetic identity with minimal external influence. This has allowed researchers to trace their ancestry more precisely.
- Linguistic Continuity: Despite their genetic ties to Southeast Asia, the Nicobarese have retained their Austroasiatic language roots

(Khmuic branch), linking them to other Southeast Asian populations.

What are the Key Facts About the Nicobarese Tribe?

- **Geography:** The Nicobarese live on the Nicobar Islands in the Bay of Bengal, part of India's Andaman and Nicobar Islands Union Territory. The Nicobar Islands consist of 19 islands, the major islands are Car Nicobar, Kamorta, Nancowrie, and Great Nicobar, which have both hilly and flat terrains. Great Nicobar is the southernmost and largest of the Nicobar Islands.
- **Ethnic Group:** The Nicobarese belong to the Mongoloid ethnic group and have a population of over 27,000. While not divided into tribes, they are classified into six territorial groups: Car Nicobar, Chowra, Teressa with Bompoka, Central Group, Southern Group, and the Shompen (inland tribe of Great Nicobar). **Social Structure:** Patriarchal joint family system known as Tuhet. With no individual ownership, the Tuhet collectively owns land, coconut trees, and pigs.

3. Significance of Sacred Groves

(Use this content in the topic of syllabus – Unit 3.3 Paper II).

- **Community-protected Forest patches** with cultural and ecological significance, conserved through traditional customs and religious beliefs. Found across India, these groves serve as biodiversity hotspots and water recharge zones. **Biodiversity Conservation:** Home to rare and endemic species, acting as genetic reservoirs.
- **Water Conservation:** Many groves are associated with springs, ponds, and rivers, ensuring aquifer recharge E.g. Sarpa Kavu groves in Kerala are crucial for maintaining local water tables and streamflow.
- **Soil Conservation & Climate Regulation:** Dense vegetation prevents soil erosion and stabilizes ecosystems. E.g. Sarna forests in Jharkhand, conserved by tribal communities, prevent land degradation and desertification. **Cultural & Religious Importance:**

Integral to local traditions, rituals, and spiritual beliefs across tribal and rural communities. E.g. Mawphlang sacred forest in Meghalaya is central to Khasi tribal rituals and remains untouched for centuries. Disaster Mitigation: Helps prevent floods, landslides, and droughts, supporting climate resilience.

Challenges to Sacred Groves:

- **Urbanization & Encroachment:** Rapid development, land conversion, and infrastructure projects threaten sacred groves. E.g. Sacred groves in Gujarat's Dahod region are shrinking due to road expansion and real estate projects.
- **Decline in Traditional Beliefs:** Modernization and loss of indigenous knowledge weaken community-driven conservation.
- **Invasive Species:** Exotic species like *Lantana camara*, *Eupatorium odoratum*, and *Prosopis juliflora* degrade native flora. E.g. Lantana invasion in Madhya Pradesh's sacred groves has displaced indigenous medicinal plants.

Way Forward: Recognition Under Forest Rights Act (FRA): Sacred groves must be recognized as community forest resources under gram sabhas. **Inventorization & Mapping:** Conduct a nationwide survey to document sacred groves and their ecological significance. **Strengthen Community-Based Conservation:** Empower local communities, elders, and tribal groups in grove management.

4. Mishing Tribe

(Use this content in the topic of syllabus – Unit 6.1 Paper II)

- Assam's largest tribal community, the Mising tribe, celebrated the Ali Ai Ligang festival recently.

Mising Tribe

- The Mising people are an indigenous tribe from Northeast India. They are part of the Tani people, who speak Tibeto-Burmese languages.
- They live in parts of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh in India and Tibet in China.

- Tibetans call them "Lhobhas," which means "southerners" ' because they live in South Tibet and areas now in Arunachal Pradesh.
- They are one of the largest tribal groups in Assam. According to the census of India 2011, the total population of Mising is 680,424 in Assam.
- They have a life closely related to rivers, and therefore they can be described as the only riparian tribe of Northeast India.

Life and culture of Mising people revolve around agriculture and fishing.

- The agriculture practice of the Mising people was originally 'Jhum' or slash & burn method.
- However, after settling down in the plains of Assam, they have mastered the art of wet paddy cultivation, and at present they are good settled cultivators.
- Drawing their origin in Jhum cultivation, the main festival of the Mising people is 'Ali-Aye-Ligang'. Ali means edible root, Aye means seed, and Ligang means sowing festival.
- Religion: The Mising people practice the cult of 'Do-nyi – Po:lo' which literally translates into worshiping the Sun and the Moon.

5. Constitutional Safeguards for the Tribes of Nagaland

(Use this content in the topic of syllabus – Unit 7.1 Paper II)

- The Constitution of India provides special protection to the tribal communities of Nagaland to preserve their identity, customs, and traditional institutions. Article 371A grants Nagaland special constitutional status.
- Naga customary laws and social practices cannot be altered by Parliament unless approved by the Nagaland Legislative Assembly. Ownership and transfer of land and natural resources remain protected under customary practices. Religious and social customs of the Naga tribes receive constitutional protection. Village Councils function according to customary laws

and continue to play an important role in local governance. The tribes are recognised as Scheduled Tribes under the Constitution, making them eligible for reservations in education, employment, and political representation.

- Various welfare schemes under the Fifth Schedule and tribal development programmes support socio-economic development, although Nagaland itself is not covered under the Fifth Schedule due to its special constitutional status.

Government Initiatives for Tribal Development

- The Government of India and the Government of Nagaland have implemented several programmes to improve education, healthcare, livelihoods, infrastructure, and cultural preservation among the tribal communities. Article 371A safeguards Naga customary laws, land rights, religious practices, and traditional institutions. Ministry of Tribal Affairs implements welfare schemes for education, healthcare, infrastructure, and livelihood development.
- Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) provide quality residential education to tribal students. Pradhan Mantri Janjatiya Vikas Mission (PMJVM) promotes tribal entrepreneurship, value addition, and market access. Van Dhan Vikas Kendras (VDVKs) strengthen forest-based livelihoods through processing and marketing of minor forest produce. PM JANMAN (Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan) improves housing, roads, drinking water, healthcare, digital connectivity, and education in vulnerable tribal areas.
- National Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation (NSTFDC) provides concessional finance and skill development support to tribal entrepreneurs. TRIFED promotes tribal handicrafts, handloom products, bamboo crafts, and traditional art at national and international markets.

6. International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples 2026

(Use this content in the topic of syllabus – Unit 9.1 Paper II)

- International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples 2026 is observed on August 9 to promote Indigenous rights, cultures, traditional knowledge, equality, and well-being worldwide. International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples 2026 Theme. The theme for International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples 2026 is "Honouring Indigenous Midwives: Safeguarding Life and Well-being."

International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples Objectives

- The primary objective is to promote respect for the rights, dignity and cultural identity of Indigenous Peoples. Protect Indigenous rights: Promote the protection of fundamental human rights and freedoms. Promote self-determination: Support Indigenous Peoples' participation in decisions that directly affect their lives and communities. Preserve cultures: Protect Indigenous traditions, customs, languages, art and cultural practices.
- Safeguard traditional knowledge: Recognise and preserve knowledge developed and transmitted across generations. Protect land and resources: Raise awareness about Indigenous communities' relationship with their traditional lands and natural resources. Promote equality: Address discrimination, marginalisation and social inequalities. Improve healthcare: Encourage better and culturally appropriate healthcare services.
- Support education: Promote equitable access to quality education while respecting Indigenous languages and cultures. Strengthen participation: Encourage Indigenous representation in national and international decision-making.

Major Challenges Faced by Indigenous Peoples

- Despite their cultural and environmental contributions, Indigenous communities in many parts of the world continue to face significant challenges. Major challenges are: Land rights disputes: Development and other activities can affect traditional lands and resources. Cultural erosion: Globalisation and social changes can contribute to the decline of traditional practices.

Language loss: Indigenous languages face the risk of declining use among younger generations. Limited healthcare access: Remote communities may face difficulties accessing quality healthcare. Educational inequalities: Some communities experience limited access to educational opportunities.

7. Key Issue: Conservation vs Forest Rights

(Use this content in the topic of syllabus – Unit 6.2 Paper II)

- The Forest Department has issued eviction notices to thousands of households in the Agasthyamalai Biosphere Reserve (ABR) following a Supreme Court order for time-bound removal of forest encroachments. The issue highlights the tension between forest conservation and rights under the Forest Rights Act, 2006.

Forest Rights Act, 2006

- Full name: Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006. Recognises forest rights of Scheduled Tribes (STs) and other traditional forest dwellers. Cut-off: Eligible occupation must pre-date 13 December 2005. Claims are initiated and verified by Gram Sabhas and examined by higher-level committees. Key safeguard: Eviction cannot take place until recognition and verification are completed. ABR: Agasthyamalai Biosphere Reserve. Covers about 3,500 sq km across Tamil Nadu and Kerala.
- Includes Kalakkad-Mundanthurai, Srivilliputhur-Megamalai and Periyar Tiger Reserves, along with wildlife sanctuaries. CEC: Central Empowered Committee. Constituted under Supreme Court directions to monitor forest and environmental compliance. It surveyed the Agasthyamalai landscape and reported violations involving non-forestry activities.

Who are Other Traditional Forest Dwellers?

- OTFDs: Other Traditional Forest Dwellers. Non-tribal communities primarily dependent on forests for livelihood. They

must demonstrate three generations or 75 years of dependence before 13 December 2005.

- What did the Supreme Court order? Time-bound eviction plan, with rehabilitation where applicable. Legal action against wilful violators, including 118 government servants found to be encroachers. Ecological restoration after eviction. No new forest diversion or non-forest activity in ABR until encroachments are removed. Possible deployment of paramilitary forces for enforcement.
- Key Issue: Conservation vs Forest Rights
- Conservation: Evictions aim to restore critical tiger habitat and remove non-forest activities. Rights concern: Eviction before completion of FRA recognition and verification can violate statutory safeguards.

8. Solutions to speed up work on Eklavya schools: House panel to Centre

(Use this content in the topic of syllabus – Unit 7.2 Paper II)

- The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Social Justice and Empowerment flagged delays in constructing and operationalising Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS). Only 428 of 728 sanctioned schools have been completed, while 118 continue from government or rented buildings.
- EMRS: Eklavya Model Residential Schools. Provides free residential education from Classes 6 to 12 to Scheduled Tribe (ST) students in tribal-majority and remote areas. Nodal Ministry: Ministry of Tribal Affairs.
- Managing body: National Education Society for Tribal Students (NESTS). Aim: Improve educational access while preserving tribal cultural identity.

What did the Panel Find?

- 428/728 schools completed. 249 under construction. 51 at pre-construction stage. 118 schools operate from temporary government/rented buildings. Delays have caused construction cost escalation. Panel suggested an independent monitoring agency and an alternative implementation mechanism.

Scholarship Concerns

- Scholarship funds are often released in the next academic year due to delays in State/Union Territory verification. The Committee criticised the repeated explanation that States need more time for verification. It also recommended reviewing the 8 lakh annual income ceiling for the free coaching scheme for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Other Backward Classes (OBCs). Government accepted 14 of 25 recommendations; the panel rejected responses on four issues.

Why is Implementation Weak?

- Federal dependence: Central schemes depend on States for construction and verification. Weak monitoring: Delays accumulate without independent oversight. Cost escalation: Delays increase construction costs and budget requirements. Portal mismatch: Scholarship portals and State verification timelines do not align well.
- Constitutional Framework: Article 15(4): Enables special provisions for advancement of socially and educationally backward classes and STs. Article 46: Directs the State to promote educational and economic interests of STs. Article 275(1): Provides Central grants for tribal welfare and Scheduled Areas.

9. What are the challenges to applying a creamy layer to SC/STs

(Use this content in the topic of syllabus – Unit 7.1 Paper II)

- The Centre has filed an affidavit in the Supreme Court opposing the introduction of a “creamy layer” income filter within reservations for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes

(STs). It has argued that the historical disadvantage faced by these communities is rooted in untouchability and social exclusion, not economic backwardness, and that any change to reservation policy is for Parliament to decide, not the courts.

What is the creamy layer concept?

- Definition: The creamy layer is an income and status filter that excludes the socially and economically advanced members of a backward class from reservation benefits. Its purpose is to ensure quota benefits reach the genuinely disadvantaged within a group rather than its better-off sections.

Why does the government distinguish SC/ST identification from OBC identification?

- Basis of SC status: SCs face historical disadvantage stemming from the practice of untouchability, a form of social exclusion not tied to income. Basis of ST status: STs are identified by their distinct cultures, geographical isolation, and backwardness. Basis of OBC status: OBCs are identified primarily through a combination of social, educational, and economic disadvantages, which makes an economic filter relevant to them.
- Objective of SC/ST quotas: The stated aim is social equality, overcoming historical discrimination, and inclusive participation in public life, since discrimination against these groups does not occur on the basis of economic conditions.

What are the challenges to applying a creamy layer to SC/STs?

- Persistence of untouchability: Social exclusion continues irrespective of income, so an economic test may exclude those still facing discrimination. Absence of reliable data: No comprehensive dataset tracks the income profile of SC and ST beneficiaries, making a fair income threshold hard to set. Constitutional bar on judicial rewriting: Under Articles 341 and 342, only Parliament can alter SC and ST entitlements, limiting judicial intervention.
- Risk of under-representation: An income filter could shrink the eligible pool and leave reserved seats unfilled where few qualify. Definitional complexity: Fixing who counts as advanced within a

socially stigmatised group is contested and administratively difficult.

10. Major Challenges faced by DNTs, NTs, and SNTs

(Use this content in the topic of syllabus – Unit 9.1 Paper II)

- The Denotified Tribes (DNTs), Nomadic Tribes (NTs), and Semi-Nomadic Tribes (SNTs) in India face numerous challenges, including denial of caste certificates in most states.
- Despite the Indian Government launching the Scheme for Economic Empowerment of DNTs scheme (SEED) for their upliftment, various other issues have led to growing discontent among these communities.
- Historical Injustice: These tribes were labeled criminal tribes under the Criminal Tribes Act, 1871 during British rule, stigmatizing them for generations.
- Despite being denotified in 1952, the stigma persists, impacting their social and economic inclusion. Historically, Nomadic Tribes and De-notified Tribes never had access to private land or home ownership.
- Unclassified Communities: The Idate Commission (2017) identified a total of 1,526 DNT, NT and SNT communities. Out of these 1,526 identified communities, 269 communities are still unclassified under the categories of either SC, ST or OBC. Similarly, many individuals from these communities are unable to obtain caste certificates in 29 states, limiting their access to welfare schemes.
- Several estimates suggest a significant population of over 25 crore individuals, yet many lack basic identity recognition.
- Implementation Gaps: Recommendations of the Idate Commission, including a permanent commission and caste-census inclusion, remain unaddressed. The SEED scheme has seen limited success due to delays and lack of outreach. Overlapping

benefits with SC/ST/OBC schemes lead to difficulties in beneficiary identification.

- SEED
- About: The Scheme for Economic Empowerment Denotified, Nomadic, Semi Nomadic communities was launched in February 2022 by the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment.
- Aim and Components: It aims to provide free competitive exam coaching to these students for Civil Services, entry to professional courses like medicine, engineering, MBA, etc. To provide health insurance to families, to uplift clusters of these communities through livelihood initiatives, and to provide financial assistance for housing.

11. Agasthyamalai Evictions and the Forest Rights Act, 2006

(Use this content in the topic of syllabus – Unit 6.2 Paper II)

- The Forest Department has issued eviction notices to thousands of households in the Agasthyamalai Biosphere Reserve (ABR), particularly in Tamil Nadu's Theni district, following a Supreme Court directive based on the Central Empowered Committee (CEC) findings. The move has sparked controversy over whether the eviction drive adequately safeguards the forest rights guaranteed under the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006.

What is the Background of the Agasthyamalai Biosphere Reserve Eviction Orders?

- Supreme Court Directives: Based on the CEC's findings, the Supreme Court ordered the removal of non-forestry activities, commercial infrastructure, and encroachers within critical protected areas like the Kalakkad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve and Srivilliputhur-Megamalai Tiger Reserve. The Court directed Tamil Nadu to prepare and implement a time-bound, division-wise encroachment eviction plan, including rehabilitation “wherever applicable” and ecological restoration.

Key Concerns Regarding the Eviction Orders

- **Ignoring Statutory Verification:** The FRA provides a transparent, decentralized process for claiming individual and community rights, verified primarily by the *Gram Sabhas* and multi-departmental committees. Authorities have largely bypassed this mechanism, treating all occupants as illegal encroachers without proper data on whose occupation falls outside the FRA's scope. **Violation of the Eviction Bar:** The FRA explicitly mandates that no forest dweller can be evicted *"till the recognition and verification procedure is complete."* Wrongful dispossession of an SC/ST person from land, or interference with the enjoyment of forest rights, can constitute an offence under the the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989.
- **Misinterpretation of Tenure Rules:** The administration and judiciary frequently impose extra-legal requirements such as demanding that Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (OTFDs) prove three generations (75 years) of occupation specifically for the *exact land claimed* before 2005. The FRA does not stipulate this rigid restriction.
- **Restrictions on Livelihood:** Authorities have hampered FRA implementation by citing commercial cultivation. However, the FRA does not inherently prohibit commercial activities on all forest lands; it explicitly defines "bonafide livelihood needs" to include the sale of surplus produce and permits grazing.

12. Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups

(Use this content in the topic of syllabus – Unit 9.1 Paper II)

- Ministry of Tribal Affairs has implemented the scheme of "Development of PVTGs" which covers 75 Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) for their comprehensive socio-economic development.
- Under the scheme, State Governments submits Conservation-cum-Development (CCD) plans on the basis of their requirement.
- 100% grants-in-aid are made available to States as per the

provisions of the scheme.

- Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)
- In India, tribal population makes up for 8.6% of the total population.
- PVTGs are more vulnerable among the tribal groups. Due to this factor, more developed and assertive tribal groups take a major chunk of the tribal development funds because of which PVTGs need more funds directed for their development.
- In 1973, the Dhebar Commission created Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) as a separate category, who are less developed among the tribal groups. In 2006, the Government of India renamed the PTGs as PVTGs.
- In this context, in 1975, the Government of India initiated to identify the most vulnerable tribal groups as a separate category called PVTGs and declared 52 such groups, while in 1993 an additional 23 groups were added to the category, making it a total of 75 PVTGs out of 705 Scheduled Tribes.
- PVTGs have some basic characteristics - they are mostly homogenous, with a small population, relatively physically isolated, absence of written language, relatively simple technology and a slower rate of change etc.
- Among the 75 listed PVTG's the highest number are found in Odisha.

13. Role of Tribals in Shaping India's Socio-cultural and Developmental Fabric

(Use this content in the topic of syllabus – Unit 7.1 Paper II)

- Cultural Preservation and Rich Heritage: Tribal communities have played a pivotal role in preserving India's rich cultural diversity, contributing significantly to the country's folklore, traditions, and artistic expressions.
- Their deep connection to nature and unique customs serve as a vital counterbalance to the homogenizing forces of

modernization. For instance, the Gond and Bhil tribes are famous for their vibrant art, which is now gaining global recognition.

- The Warli tribe, known for their distinct folk art, also contributes to the cultural fabric of India, with their intricate wall paintings depicting daily life and nature.
- Environmental Stewardship and Biodiversity Conservation: Tribal communities, especially in forested regions, have been at the forefront of environmental stewardship, protecting biodiversity through traditional knowledge systems.
- Their sustainable practices in resource management have ensured the survival of crucial ecosystems.
- The tribals' role as the guardians of forests can be seen in regions like Bastar (Chhattisgarh), where local tribal communities have actively opposed deforestation for mining.
- Also, the Dongria Kondh tribe in Odisha is renowned for their efforts in protecting the Niyamgiri hills, fighting against the bauxite mining project that threatened their sacred lands.
- Contribution to India's Agricultural Landscape: Tribal communities have significantly contributed to the evolution of India's agricultural practices, often being the first adopters of organic farming methods.

14. Why Adivasis are resisting the Ken-Betwa river-linking project

(Use this content in the topic of syllabus – Unit 6.1 Paper II)

- Construction on the Daudhan dam across the Ken river in Madhya Pradesh's Bundelkhand region is advancing while 22 villages in Panna and Chhatarpur districts face displacement. The project is designed to move water to 13 water stressed districts, and the households paying for that transfer are largely Gond Adivasi families whose forest based livelihoods and absence of recorded land title place them outside the compensation package built for the transfer. A protest movement led by Adivasi women has been

running since 2022 and drew national attention in April and July 2026.

Ken Betwa river linking project

- What it does: It transfers water described as surplus from the Ken river to the Betwa river through a canal, for irrigation and drinking water in Bundelkhand. Forest Advisory Committee : What it is: The statutory committee under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 that advises the Union government on proposals to divert forest land for non forest use. Its role here: Its 2017 record carries the detailed project report's estimate of the tree felling the project requires. Chita Aandolan : A symbolic pyre protest in which affected villagers lie on funeral pyres to signal that displacement amounts to the end of their life in the place. Who leads it: It has been led by Adivasi women of the affected villages and has run since 2022.

What are the numbers behind the displacement?

- Villages submerged: 10 villages, including Daudhan, will be submerged by the reservoir. Villages displaced for compensatory forest: Because the project falls within the Panna Tiger Reserve, the people of another 12 villages will be displaced to offset the loss of forest area. Total affected: 22 villages across Panna and Chhatarpur districts in all. Population at the dam site: Around 700 people live in Daudhan village, next to which construction is under way.
- A village outside the submergence zone: Narauli, home to around 300 people and inhabited mostly by the Gond community, sits on a hill outside the submergence zone and faces the same loss of forest access. Cash compensation: Villagers who were 18 years or older in February 2024 are eligible for Rs 12.5 lakh each. Land compensation: Rs 5 lakh per acre of acquired land, payable only against titled land. Forest area submerged: The Daudhan dam submerges about 4,141 hectares of Panna Tiger Reserve land, within a wider rehabilitation process affecting about 1,913 families.

15. Tribal Education in India

(Use this content in the topic of syllabus – Unit 7.2 Paper II)

- About: Tribal education policy relies on residential schooling, since Scheduled Tribe habitations are dispersed across forest and hill terrain where a viable day school catchment does not exist. Population base: Scheduled Tribes number about 10.45 crore, roughly 8.6 percent of India's population as per Census 2011, spread across more than 700 notified communities.
- The persistent gap: Scheduled Tribe literacy and school retention remain below the national average, with the steepest dropout at the transition from upper primary to secondary. Institutional structure: Delivery runs through State run and aided Ashram Schools, centrally supported Eklavya Model Residential Schools, and hostels funded under Article 275(1) grants. Administrative frame: Scheduled Areas are governed under the Fifth Schedule, with Tribes Advisory Councils and a Governor's report to the President on their administration. Constitutional Framework Governing Tribal Welfare. Article 244 and the Fifth Schedule: Provide for the administration and control of Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes outside the North East. Sixth Schedule: Provides for autonomous district and regional councils in the tribal areas of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.
- Laws and Rules Governing Tribal Welfare and Child Safety
- Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996: Extends Panchayati Raj to Fifth Schedule areas with adaptations. Makes the Gram Sabha competent to safeguard community resources and mandates its consultation before land acquisition.
- Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006: Recognises individual and community forest rights of forest dwelling Scheduled Tribes. Recognises the right to community forest resources and to convert forest villages into revenue villages. Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009: Guarantees free and

compulsory elementary education and prescribes school infrastructure and pupil teacher norms.

- Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015: Regulates institutions housing children and prescribes standards of care and mandatory reporting. Residential facilities housing children in need of care require registration and inspection under the Act. Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989: Penalises offences against Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and provides for special courts. Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012: Applies to residential institutions and imposes mandatory reporting duties on staff.

16. Chuktia Bhunjia "Kanabara" (Arrow Marriage)

(Use this content in the topic of syllabus – Unit 6.1 Paper II)

- The Kanabara (or Arrow Marriage) is a foundational pre-puberty ritual practiced by the Chuktia Bhunjia community, a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) living primarily in the Sunabeda plateau of Odisha's Nuapada district.

Key Elements of Kanabara

- The Groom: The girl is symbolically wedded to an arrow instead of a human groom
- Pre-Puberty Timing: The ritual must be performed when the girl is between 8 and 10 years old, strictly before she hits puberty.
- Amnesty for Adult Marriage: A girl cannot legally marry a human husband in adult life unless this childhood ritual is successfully completed first.
- Observed Twice: While the primary event takes place in childhood, elements of this "half-marriage" are traditionally re-observed later during her actual adult wedding.
- Auspicious Schedule: The community priest (Pujari) identifies an auspicious day, and the ceremony is typically held during the month of Baisakh (April–May).
- Identity and Protection: The ritual is fundamentally tied to

preserving the girl's cultural identity, spiritual protection, and structural belonging within the tribe

- Community Celebration: The girl's family builds a ceremonial marriage mandap, inviting relatives and villagers who actively participate in the feasts and customary rites.

17. Porja, Bagata, and Konda Dora Tribes

(Use this content in the topic of syllabus – Unit 6.1 Paper II)

- The plight of tribal communities in Andhra Pradesh, who played a crucial role in constructing the Lower Sileru Hydro-Electric Project (LSP), has recently gained attention.
- Despite their crucial contributions in the 1970s, villages nearby Visakhapatnam settled by the Porja, Bagata, and Konda Dora tribes continue to face severe shortages of electricity and clean water.

Key Facts About the Porja, Bagata, and Konda Dora tribes

- Porja Tribe:
- The Porja tribe (sub-groups: Bondo Porja, Khond Porja and Parangi Porja), residing in the Visakhapatnam area of Andhra Pradesh, has a population of approximately 16,479 (Census, 1991).
- The term "Porja" is derived from Oriya words meaning "son of a king," reflecting their historical employment by the Jeypore rulers.
- They inhabit the hilly terrains and practice shifting cultivation, known locally as Podu.
- The Porjas practice a patriarchal system with patrilineal descent. Property inheritance and succession to hereditary offices follow this system, with the eldest son receiving an extra share.

Bagata Tribe:

- The Bagata are an aboriginal tribe of India, primarily living in the states of Andhra Pradesh and Odisha. They are also known as Bagatha, Bagat, Bagodi, Bogad, or Bhakta. Marriage pattern

revealed that they strictly follow lineage exogamy (marrying outside one's clan, or kinship). Marriage is by negotiation and elopement. Divorce and remarriage are permitted.

Konda Dora Tribe:

- They are a Scheduled Tribe of Odisha, inhabit the Konda Kamberu ranges of the Eastern Ghats, spanning south Odisha and Andhra Pradesh. Their original language, Kubi/Konda, has largely been replaced by Telugu mixed with Odia. In their society, though polygyny and child marriages are not prohibited, adult marriage and monogamy are commonly practised. Cross cousin marriages are preferred and parallel cousin marriages are strictly prohibited.

18. Why has the Centre Opposed the Creamy Layer for SC/STs?

(Use this content in the topic of syllabus – Unit 7.1 Paper II)

- Historical and Structural vs. Economic Backwardness: The Centre argued that the backwardness of SCs/STs is rooted in centuries of historical oppression, untouchability (Article 17), social stigma, and geographical isolation. This backwardness is structural. Therefore, it cannot be treated as ordinary economic deprivation.
- Persistence of Caste Stigma: Economic mobility (class elevation) does not automatically eradicate caste-based prejudices. A first-generation SC/ST Class-I officer may achieve financial parity but still suffers from a deficit in what sociologists (like Pierre Bourdieu) term "Social Capital" (institutional networks) and "Cultural Capital."
- Fallacy of Economic Determinism: Unlike Other Backward Classes (OBCs), whose identification under Article 340 is based on "Social

and Educational Backwardness" (SEBC) where economic criteria can be a proxy, SC/ST backwardness is structural. The executive maintains that treating centuries of institutionalized subjugation as mere economic deprivation misdiagnoses the Constitutional intent of affirmative action.

- **Constitutional Protection:** The Centre argues that reservations for SCs/STs, particularly in promotions, are specially protected by Article 16(4A) (inserted via the 77th Constitutional Amendment, 1995). Blindly transplanting an OBC-specific judicial doctrine into the SC/ST framework ignores the distinct legislative history of these amendments.

What Measures are Needed for Equitable SC/ST Reservation?

- **Prioritizing Sub-Categorization over Economic Exclusion:** Instead of applying the creamy layer, state governments should leverage the *Davinder Singh* ruling to undertake evidence-based sub-classification. By allocating dedicated sub-quotas to the most marginalized sub-groups (the "weakest of the weak"), the state can achieve true intra-category equity without violating the historical basis of SC/ST reservation.
- **Institutionalizing Pre-Legislative Socio-Economic Audits:** Any recalibration of identity-based affirmative action must be preceded by a comprehensive socio-economic census. Policy shifts must be driven by robust empirical data on intra-group disparities, not anecdotal evidence. De-linking Social Capital from Financial Capital: Policymakers must recognize that affirmative action is a tool for representation and dignity, not merely poverty alleviation. Interventions should focus on capacity building, such as sensitizing interview boards to distinguish between inherited privilege (e.g., urban English fluency) and true intellectual depth.

19. Tribal Urbanism

(Use this content in the topic of syllabus – Unit 9.1 Paper II)

- Tribal urbanism is how tribal people and cultures interact with city life. It's about tribal people moving to cities, adapting to urban life while often facing challenges, and still keeping their cultural connections alive. It also includes the struggles over land as cities grow, the economic hardships many tribal people face in cities, and how urban planning often ignores their needs. Tribal urbanism can also lead to exciting mixes of traditional and modern cultures.
- Migration and Adaptation: Many tribal people migrate to cities like Mumbai, Delhi, or Bengaluru seeking better opportunities. For example, members of the *Gond* community from Maharashtra might move to Mumbai for work in construction or the service industry.
- Maintaining Identity: Even in urban settings, tribal communities often maintain strong ties to their cultural heritage. The *Santhal* community in Kolkata, for example, might celebrate their traditional festivals like *Baha Parab* or *Sohrai* in the city, forming associations to preserve their cultural practices and language. They might also maintain connections with their villages in Jharkhand or Odisha.
- Land and Resource Issues: The rapid expansion of cities like Ranchi (Jharkhand) has led to encroachment on tribal lands. The *Munda* and *Oraon* communities around Ranchi have faced displacement and loss of agricultural land due to urbanization and industrial development. Legal battles over land rights are a common occurrence in such situations.
- Socio-economic Disparities: Tribal people in cities often experience significant socio-economic disparities. For instance, *Adivasi* communities in cities like Ahmedabad (Gujarat)

often live in slums and face high rates of unemployment and poverty. Access to quality education and healthcare can be limited, perpetuating cycles of disadvantage. Cultural Hybridity: Tribal urbanism can lead to interesting forms of cultural hybridity. For example, tribal artists in cities like Bhopal (Madhya Pradesh) might blend traditional art forms with contemporary urban themes, creating new styles of painting or music. This fusion of cultures is a dynamic aspect of tribal urbanism.

20. Key points of 'Sankalp se Siddhi'

(Use this content in the topic of syllabus – Unit 9.1 Paper II)

- The 'Sankalp Se Siddhi' initiative, also known as 'Mission Van Dhan', was introduced by the central government in 2021, in line with the Prime Minister's aim to establish a sustainable livelihood for India's tribal population.
- Through this mission, TRIFED aims to expand its operation through convergence of various schemes of different ministries and departments and launch various tribal development programmes in mission mode.
- Through this mission, establishment of several Van Dhan Vikas Kendras (VDVKs), haat bazaars, mini TRIFOOD units, common facility centres, TRIFOOD parks, SFRUTI (Scheme of Fund for regeneration of traditional industries) clusters, tribes india retail store, e-commerce platform for trifold and tribes, India brands are being targeted.
- TRIFED has been implementing several noteworthy programmes for the empowerment of the tribals. Over the past two years, the 'Mechanism for Marketing of Minor Forest Produce (MFP) through Minimum Support Price (MSP) & Development of Value Chain for MFP' has impacted the tribal ecosystem in a major way.
- TRIFED has also injected Rs. 3000 crores into the tribal economy, even during such difficult times, aided by government push. The

Van Dhan tribal start-ups, a component of the same scheme, have emerged as a source of employment generation for tribal gatherers and forest dwellers and the home-bound tribal artisans.

TRIFED is involved in following initiatives:

- Van Dhan Vikas Yojana: Van Dhan Scheme, a component of 'MSP for MFP', was launched in 2018. An initiative targeting livelihood generation for tribal gatherers and transforming them into entrepreneurs.
- The idea is to set-up tribal community-owned Van Dhan Vikas Kendra Clusters (VDVKCs) in predominantly forested tribal districts. VDVKs are for providing skill upgradation and capacity building training to tribals and setting up of primary processing and value addition facilities.

TRIFOOD Scheme:

- It was launched in August 2020 and promotes value addition to MFP. TRIFOOD parks will produce processed foods from minor forest produce and also from the food gathered by the tribal people in that region.

21. Issues Related to Recruitment to EMRS

(Use this content in the topic of syllabus – Unit 6.2 Paper II)

- Requirement of Hindi Competency:
 - The recent centralization of recruitment introduced Hindi competency as a mandatory requirement. This has resulted in a large number of staff recruited from Hindi-speaking states being posted to EMRS in southern states, where the language, food, and culture are unfamiliar to them. The government has stated that the requirement of basic Hindi language competency is not unusual, as it is mandatory for Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas and Kendriya Vidyalayas recruitment as well.
- Impact on Tribal Students:
 - Most tribal students in Eklavya schools would benefit from

teachers who understand their local cultural contexts, as the communities have very specific contexts under which learning can be made conducive. Government officials have stated that teacher recruits are expected to learn the local language within two years, but there have been apprehensions among the recruited teachers to learn a new, completely different language.

Way Forward

- **Localised Recruitment:** The recruitment of teachers from local communities should be prioritised to ensure they are familiar with the cultural and linguistic contexts of the students. Both local and non-local teachers should be recruited to ensure a diversity of teaching methods while respecting local traditions.
- **Flexible Language Requirements:** The mandatory Hindi competency requirement should be reevaluated to allow for flexibility in non-Hindi speaking regions. Language support programs should be actively encouraged for teachers to learn the local languages of the regions they are posted to.
- **Cultural Sensitivity Training:** Comprehensive cultural sensitivity training should be provided to all teachers, especially those from non-local areas, to help them understand and integrate into the community they are serving. Develop ongoing professional development programs focusing on local cultural contexts and language skills.
- **Policy Review:** Regular reviews of the recruitment policy should be conducted to assess its impact on both teachers and students, making necessary adjustments to address emerging issues.

22. Social conditions of Paliyar tribes

(Use this content in the topic of syllabus – Unit 6.1 Paper II)

- Recent findings highlight the urgent need for immediate government action to address the socio-economic challenges

faced by the Paliyar and other tribes.

- The Paliyan people, also known as Palaiyar or Pazhaiyar, are a Dravidian tribal group living mainly in Tamil Nadu and Kerala. The Paliyan tribe historically relied on hunting, gathering, and foraging for their sustenance. They practice shifting cultivation
- The Paliyans speak a Dravidian language closely related to Tamil, emphasizing their cultural heritage and regional ties. The society is patriarchal, with men holding positions of authority. They worship nature spirits and deities residing in the forests, mountains, and rivers. They have customary burial practices where the deceased are buried in designated areas near their residential settlements, commonly on the western side.
- Efforts are made to preserve Paliyan cultural traditions, language, and knowledge systems, including ethnomedicinal practices and ecological wisdom.

About Paliyar Tribe

- They are an indigenous tribal community primarily found in the hilly regions of Tamil Nadu and Kerala. They are and have been known by multiple names, such as the Paliyans, Pazhaiyarares, and Panaiyars. Historically, the Paliyars were spread all over the Dindigul district and the Sirumalai Palani hills, adjacent to the Western Ghats.
- As they inhabited the Palani hills, they were known as Panaiyars. Language: They primarily speak a dialect related to Tamil, reflecting their Dravidian linguistic heritage.

Occupation:

- Traditionally, the Paliyars were hunters and gatherers, residing in the forests of the Western Ghats. Presently, they have transformed into traders of forest products, food cultivators, and beekeepers, with some working intermittently as wage labourers, mostly on plantations. They are recognized for their extensive knowledge and traditional practices pertaining to the use of medicinal plants. Paliyars have small communities called kudis, sometimes living in caves or mud shelters.

23. Gender Equity in Tribal Inheritance

(Use this content in the topic of syllabus – Unit 7.1 Paper II)

- **Traditional Patrilineal Dominance** : Most tribal societies follow patrilineal systems where property, land, and lineage pass exclusively through the male line. In these traditions, daughters and wives are generally excluded from inheriting ancestral property to prevent land from leaving the clan.
- **The Matrilineal Exceptions** : Some prominent indigenous communities practice matrilineal inheritance, where property and family names pass through the female line. Examples include the Khasi, Jaintia, and Garo tribes of Meghalaya, India, where the youngest daughter (*Khadduh*) often inherits the ancestral estate.
- **Exemption from General Laws**: In many countries, tribal communities are exempted from uniform civil inheritance laws to protect their distinct culture. For example, in India, Scheduled Tribes are largely exempted from the Hindu Succession Act, meaning state-enacted progressive gender laws do not automatically apply to them.
- **Customary Law vs. Constitutional Rights** : A major conflict exists between protecting tribal customary laws (which often deny women land rights) and upholding constitutional guarantees of gender equality and non-discrimination.
- **High Vulnerability of Widows** : Under many tribal customary laws, a widow does not inherit her deceased husband's land. She may only retain a usufructuary right (the right to use the land for survival), which she often loses if she remarries outside the tribe or if male relatives displace her.
- **Judicial Interventions** : Courts are increasingly stepping in to bridge the gap. Landmark judgments, such as those by the Supreme Court of India, have ruled that tribal women are entitled to equal inheritance rights under the Right to Life (Article 21),

declaring that gender discrimination cannot be shielded by custom.

- **Impact on Economic Empowerment :** Denying tribal women inheritance rights severely limits their economic independence. Without land ownership, they cannot access institutional credit, bank loans, or government agricultural subsidies, keeping them trapped in cycles of poverty.
- **Livelihood and Food Security:** Tribal women often perform the majority of agricultural labor. Granting them secure inheritance and land rights directly improves household food security and investments in children's education, as women statistically spend more income on family welfare.

24. Digital Ethnography Initiatives

(Use this content in the topic of syllabus – Unit 9.2 Paper II)

- **Adaptation of Traditional Methods :** Digital ethnography transitions classic immersion methods into digital spaces. Researchers conduct participant observation and in-depth interviews within online communities, social media platforms, virtual worlds, and gaming ecosystems rather than physical villages.
- **Archiving and Cultural Preservation :** Many initiatives focus on digitizing endangered indigenous knowledge. By recording oral histories, traditional songs, and rituals, digital repositories ensure that the cultural heritage of marginalized tribes is preserved for future generations.
- **Co-Creation and Indigenous Agency :** Modern digital initiatives emphasize collaborative curation. Instead of outsiders studying a community, indigenous peoples are provided with smartphones and recording gear to document their own lives, giving them complete agency over their narrative.
- **Overcoming Geographical Barriers :** Digital tools allow ethnographers to study highly dispersed or transnational

communities. For example, researchers can track how displaced diaspora groups maintain their cultural identity, language, and rituals across different continents simultaneously.

- **Multi-Modal Data Collection Initiatives** utilize a rich mix of data formats beyond text notes. Researchers analyze vlogs, memes, podcasts, emojis, and live streams, treating these digital artifacts as vital expressions of contemporary folklore and societal values.
- **Mapping Digital Inequalities** : Many initiatives specifically investigate the digital divide. They study how factors like rural isolation, poverty, and gender inequality affect a community's access to tech, and how subcultures creatively adapt limited technology to their needs.
- **Ethical Re-evaluation** Conducting research online introduces unique ethical hurdles. Digital ethnography initiatives must constantly navigate complex issues regarding informed consent, avatar anonymity, and data privacy, especially when studying vulnerable or closed online groups.
- **Use of AI and Big Data Analytics** : To manage massive amounts of online interaction, researchers pair qualitative observation with AI-driven text analysis and data visualization tools. This allows them to track macro-cultural trends across millions of social posts while maintaining a nuanced, human-centric perspective.

25. Juanga Tribe

(Use this content in the topic of syllabus – Unit 6.1 Paper II)

- The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) recently sought an action taken report from the district magistrate-cum-collector of Keonjhar on alleged human rights violations of the Juanga tribe, a PVTG in the district.

About Juanga Tribe

- Juang is one of the 13 particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PVTGs) of the total 62 tribes found in Odisha. As per the 2011 census, the Juang population stands at approximately 50,000.

- They are primarily concentrated in the current districts of Keonjhar and Dhenkanal in Odisha.
- Language: Linguistically, they converse in the Juang language, a member of the Munda family within the Austroasiatic languages.
- The Juangs are known for their clan structure and kinship organisations.

Livelihood

- Initially reliant on hunting, gathering, and limited cultivation, the declaration of their forests as reserves during the British colonial era prompted a shift in traditional customs.
- Adapting to these changes, the Juang people showcased expertise in basket-weaving, exchanging their products with neighboring caste villages for essentials like salt, oil, and food.

Clothing

- Historically known as Patuas or “leaf-wearers,” Juang women adorned leaf girdles, while men wore small loincloths.
- Following contact with neighbouring communities and government agencies, the Juangs were forced to adopt clothing from other communities.

Beliefs

- Although they have some Hindu beliefs, Juangs practice mostly ancient animistic rituals.
- Their supreme god is the sun god. However, they have also adopted the Hindu deities in addition to tribal gods and goddesses.