

K.V RAMESH ANTHROPOLOGY INSTITUTE
OLD RAJENDRA NAGAR, NEW DELHI

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Prehistory

1. Oldest Stone Tools Ever Found Were Not Made by Human Hands, Study Suggests



Archaeologists have revealed what could be the oldest stone tools ever found, and they think someone other than our closest Homo ancestors may have made them.

Unearthed in 2016 at Nyayanga, Kenya, on the banks of Lake Victoria, the ancient implements fit with the design of the Oldowan toolkit, the name given to the earliest kinds of stone tools made by human-like hands. According to dating estimates, the newly discovered tools were made between **2.6 and 3 million years ago**. In total, 330 artifacts were found among 1,776 fossilized animal bones that showed signs of butchery. Before this, the oldest known Oldowan tools dated to 2.6 million years ago. But until now, the earliest Oldowan sites were confined to ***Ethiopia's Afar Triangle***, in two localities roughly 50 kilometers (31 miles) apart. The Nyayanga site expands the known geographic range of the earliest Oldowan tools by more than 1,300 kilometers to the southwest. It also pushes their emergence back to roughly 2.9 million years ago, a result the researchers produced after narrowing their age estimates using a combination of dating techniques. What's really interesting is that here at this site you have some of the earliest evidence of butchery of megafauna, even before the advent of the use of fire.

Along with the bones and tools, found two teeth – an upper and lower left molar, one fractured in half, the other nearly complete – which the researchers identified as Paranthropus, a distant cousin of humans. Carbon isotope analysis of the molar tooth enamel suggested the early humans from which they came ate a lot of plant foods, as well as devouring meat scavenged from animal carcasses. Leading the researchers to suggest that perhaps these hominins made or were at least using the stone tools, not our more direct ancestors from the Homo genus.

Oldowan tools are often attributed to the genus Homo, but the overlapping existence of other hominins such as Paranthropus and now these two teeth suggest that Homo weren't the only ones to master making tools that helped them expand their diets. The assumption among researchers has long been that only the genus Homo, to which humans belong, was capable of making stone

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tools," says Potts. "But finding Paranthropus alongside these stone tools opens up a fascinating whodunnit."

Conclusions :

- Tool making ability also present in our distant cousins- Paranthropus
- Earlier thought of human evolution occurred in East Africa , now it extended to even far south of African continent

2. Buzahom - prehistoric site can change story of evolution



The site might not be as early as the index Neolithic site of Mehrgarh in Pakistan, which is dated to 8th millennium BCE, but it has the power to ***change the narrative of linear evolution of cultures*** in the subcontinent to that of ***coexistence between early farmers, agro-pastoralists and traders during prehistoric times.***

The archaeological site, located in the Srinagar district of Kashmir valley, it brings to light the *transition of human habitation from Neolithic period to Megalithic period and to the Early Historical period*. The site showcases fusion between the pastoralists and the agriculturists as a result of change in climate during the Neolithic period. The exceptional findings, especially from the neolithic levels, involve splendid craftsmanship into stone and bone tools, unique architectural features that evolved with time and environmental changes, and array of burials displaying unique burial practices of both humans and animals, together help in reconstruction of Burzahom's story. *It breaks the popular notion of isolated evolution of cultures and most importantly of linear progression of history.*

From pit dwellings to mud-brick structures : Surrounded by the Pir Panjal Range in the valley of Kashmir, 16 km north-east of Srinagar, Burzahom was discovered in 1939 by H De Terra and TT Patterson of Yale-Cambridge expedition. Then followed the excavations in 1960 by TN Khazanchi of Archaeological Survey of India (ASI). The site was excavated for over ten years till 1971 and a ***fourfold cultural sequence*** was noted.

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These four periods span from 3rd millennium BCE to 1st millennium BCE and to 3rd/4th century CE.

- ***Period I is labelled as Aceramic Neolithic*** because ceramics, or 'pottery' as archaeologists like to refer to them, was absent in the material culture in 96 per cent of the dwelling pits. These underground pits, mostly circular or rectangular, are frequently surrounded by postholes. Steps and arched corridors are also found in the circular pits due to superimposition of pits. These pit chambers might have been used for different functions. Polished bones, stone artefacts, and tools made of antlers and other animal bones were yielded. It was also noted that food gathering was a part of the subsistence pattern with the introduction of cereal farming.
- ***Period II—Ceramic Neolithic phase:*** As the name suggests, it had ceramics as part of its material culture milieu. As interesting as the findings of this phase were, the archaeologists divided it into two parts, Period IIA and Period IIB. The former, apart from the presence of handmade pottery, yielded a large number of circular pits suggestive of growth in human population. The evidence of domestication of wild animals such as wild dogs, sheep and goats showed the growing sedentary life in the valley, defining the changing dynamics in human-animal relationship. Period IIB is noted as an interesting one in the life of the people of Burzahom. A distinct change in technology is noted with new tool types—double-edged picks, spindle whorls, spear-head, copper arrowheads, harvesters, celts among other things. Items such as pendants, beads and terracotta bangles suggested cultural and commercial contacts with neighbouring regions of Pakistan, Tibetan Plateau and other sub-Himalayan areas. Dwelling pits too began to be raised above the ground, owing to favourable climatic conditions with an additional use of timber. One of the most important findings from Period II was the wheel-made vase with a wild goat, which had long horns and hanging ears. The shape of the vase and its design resemble those found in Kot Diji, a pre-Harappan site location in today's Pakistan. Interestingly, this pot contained 950 carnelian and agate beads, which also point to a close contact with the Harappans.
- ***Period III is marked by the Megalithic menhirs:*** Mega meaning big and lithics are stones, therefore in simple terms they are the big stone structure akin to Stonehenge of England. Megaliths are found in the length and breadth of India except few areas. In general understanding, megaliths are largely associated with southern India. But here in the Kashmir valley, their presence is significant, which goes to show the changing dynamics between humans and their environment, and the growing complexity in the society. The pattern of living in Period III was the same as the Period IIA and Period IIB but with a small exception of rubble masonry, showcasing a gradual transition between the Neolithic and Megalithic periods.
- ***Period IV, which is marked by the beginning of the Early Historical period,*** had mud brick structures erected directly above the structures of the Megalithic period. Thus indicating continuation of habitation at the site.

Burials of pets and humans : Burial practices at Burzahom are significant due to their stratigraphical and chronological context. During the Neolithic and Megalithic period, circular shaped pits were dug for the disposal of the dead. These pits were narrow at top and wide at the bottom. The burials in the habitational area are mostly below the floor of dwellings, which were

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later plastered with 'chunam'. All burials with human and animal remains were oriented in a north-south direction with the skull towards the north. What is interesting is that the bones are found to be treated with red-ochre, which is only possible after the decomposition of the flesh, suggesting re-opening of the burials at some point.

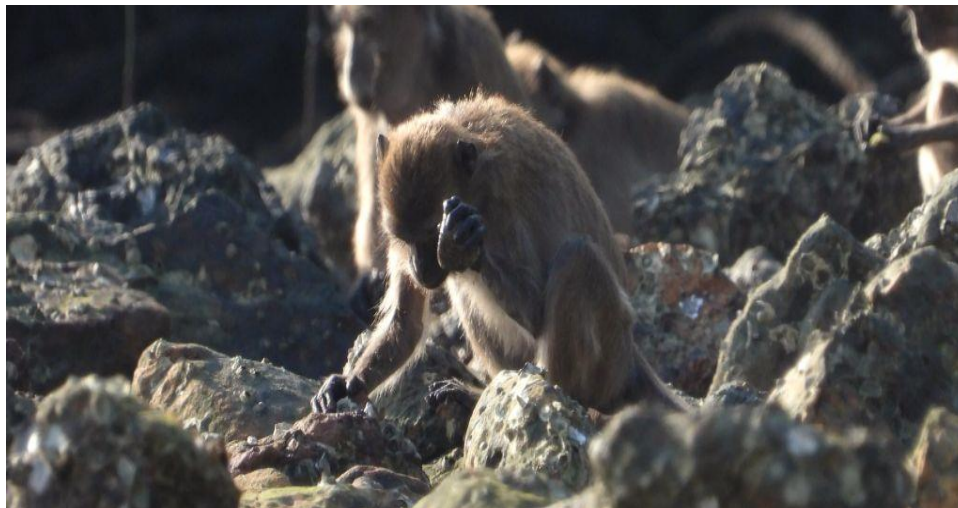
A peculiar practice of burying pet animals with human bones and separate systematic animal burials is noted at the site. Dogs, sheep, goats etc have been buried with the dead. However, mostly pet animals, especially dogs are buried with humans at Burzahom. Known as the companions of humans, dogs were treated with love and care in the society during the neolithic and megalithic period. In the finding of Period II, a dog was buried with the owner under the floor of the house. This interdependent relationship shared between dogs and the people of Burzahom is artistically depicted in the engraving on a stone slab at the site.

Burzahom's importance has been largely ignored, much like its conservation. Until recently, it was a reputed cricket ground that hosted T20 tournaments. The conservation efforts at the site have finally begun thus it seems the best time to inform the masses about its potentiality. And to urge people to think of a site, beyond early date

Conclusion:

- Most Transitional archaeological site from Early Neolithic to early historical period
- Has close contacts with pastoral , Agro-pastoral people and traders suggested that against isolate evolution of societies

3. The Broken Stones of Monkeys Look Uncannily Like Something We Used to Make



An analysis of accidentally broken stones used by **macaques to crack nuts** shows that monkeys have inadvertently been fracturing chunks of rock startlingly similar to the intentionally-created tools found at the world's earliest known archaeological sites in Africa.

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This discovery could *help scientists contextualize how ancient humans developed their first forms of technology*. The finding raises the possibility that *hand-crafted tools were initially the result of incidental use*.

Tool use is not unique to humanity, however, and there are a number of primates that are known to use stones to perform percussive tasks – cracking open nuts or shellfish, grinding seeds, and digging up roots. Crab-eating macaques have been using rocky materials for possibly thousands of years to crack open nuts and oysters, and their range is littered with the broken shards of stones that have broken from use.

The fact that these macaques use stone tools to process nuts is not surprising, as they also use tools to gain access to various shellfish as well. What is interesting is that, in doing so, they accidentally produce a substantial *archaeological record of their own that is partly indistinguishable from some hominin artifacts*.

When cracking nuts or oysters, macaques regularly and unintentionally produce stone flakes of a conchoidal shape with a sharp edge similar to those seen in the hominid archaeological record. The macaques are not known to use these flakes; once a stone tool is broken, the shards are useless to the macaques, and they go on to find other tools.

Conclusions

- *Tool use is not unique to humanity and there are a number of primates that are known to use stones.*
- *Archaeological record of primate incidental use tools is partly indistinguishable from some hominin artifacts.*
- *help scientists contextualize how ancient humans developed their first forms of technology.*

4. Archaeological Reclamation

Archaeologists can help communities retake what colonialism and racism tried to erase through a new goal of “archaeological reclamation.”

As archaeologists committed to social and racial justice, we advocate for a fundamental shift in archaeology’s purpose. *The belief that archaeologists can help communities regain places, ancestors, and belongings; reveal historical truths; and contribute to cultural revival and healing*. We call these acts “archaeological reclamation.” Thus, *reclamation i.e, archaeological reclamation specifically means that communities can assert control over their meaningful places, ancestors, belongings, and historical narratives*.

First, archaeologists uncover tangible evidence that can be used to reclaim control of, and ensure sustainable access to, significant places and landscapes. The modern notion of private property was

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employed by White settlers to justify taking Indigenous lands. These lands, however, also contain concrete evidence of Indigenous presence in the form of archaeological sites.

Second, archaeologists are trained to synthesize objects, written texts, and oral histories in ways that uncover aspects of the past that have often been ignored or suppressed by people with power.

Finally, archaeology can help community partners reawaken and revive traditional practices. Many Euro-colonial institutions—missions, incarceration camps, residential schools, and more—inflicted violence and lasting trauma on the societies they sought to oppress. In some cases, traditions were hidden, dramatically transformed, or lost.

Conclusion : Archaeology can settle who are real owners ancient places, artifacts , lands etc.. in favour of indigenous communities.

Linguistic Anthropology

5. Chimpanzees have their own language — and scientists just learned how they put "words" together



Till now , we belived that language skills may exist in a *limited capacity* in our nearest evolutionary neighbors, the great apes, many of whom have been trained to communicate via sign language by human researchers. Yet while sign language is communicated physically, researchers did not believe that great apes possessed their own comparable, complex spoken language.

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But, A new study reveals that *chimpanzees* — or at least, a group of 46 chimpanzees at **Tai National Park** in the African country of Côte d'Ivoire — are capable of complex vocalizations far beyond what more pessimistic scientists thought was possible. Their "words" were not like human phonetic words, but a combination of chimpanzee sounds.

And the size of the chimp dictionary? Almost 400 words. "Chimpanzees produced 390 unique vocal sequences," explained the scientists, who published their research in the journal *Communications Biology*. "Most vocal units emitted singly were also emitted in two-unit sequences (bigrams), which in turn were embedded into three-unit sequences (trigrams)." What is astonishing in the chimpanzee vocal repertoire... is the extreme flexibility in which they can combine their limited number of signals."

The scientists suggest that the way the vocal sequences were arranged indicates they could come up with new words, too. "From a purely structural perspective, the capacity to organize single units into structured sequences offers a versatile system potentially suitable for expansive meaning generation," they write. "Further research must show to what extent these structural sequences signal predictable meanings." "This line of research will help us understand how human language may have evolved.

This research has implications which go far beyond simply understanding how chimpanzees communicate. Although humans have developed thousands of languages through millennia of recorded history, they have not done so by producing thousands of different types of sounds. Like chimpanzees, humans have had to utilize a limited range of sounds to convey a limitless expanse of meanings. As such, the new research has potentially profound implications for evolutionary biologists.

That said, Crockford added that scientists still have a long way to go before they can truly tap into the potential of what they now know about chimpanzee vocalizations.

"The next step is to determine if these sequences allow chimpanzees to convey substantially more messages to their group mates than single calls allow... [For instance,] if an animal has 10 call types and cannot combine them, they can send a maximum of 10 messages," Crockford told Salon. "If they can flexibly combine them, as we demonstrate the chimpanzees do, they have the potential to convey many more messages. Now we need to assess whether they really use that potential to convey many messages."

Conclusions:

Chimpanzees are capable of complex vocalizations but their "words" were not like human phonetic words, but a combination of chimpanzee sounds made with 400 standalone words

6. Can Indigenous Language Comics Save a Mother Tongue?



HÑÑÑHO IS ONE of 68 ancestral tongues still spoken in Mexico, and the seventh largest by number of speakers. But many of these languages are endangered. About 1 in 5 Mexican citizens self-identify as Indigenous, roughly 26 million people. However, since the 1930s, the percentage of speakers of Indigenous languages has dropped from 16 percent to 6.2 percent, according to the National Institute of Statistics and Geography. At the same time, long-developed knowledge, cultural practices, and intricate details of the land have also been lost.

Many factors have contributed to the steady drop in speakers, including the longstanding policy of “Hispanicization,” or requiring people to use Spanish, which began in the late 18th century under Spain’s colonial rule. The Mexican government later adopted this policy, which intensified after the Mexican Revolution ended in 1920 and the Minister of Public Education José Vasconcelos increased rural education but required lessons to be taught in Spanish.

Hekking began to see a bifurcation between generations. Parents were bilingual or only spoke Hññño, and children only spoke Spanish. Oral transmission from adults to children had helped the language survive despite limited writing, but this change troubled him.

LANGUAGE LEARNERS FROM Ññño communities across Mexico, Texas, and California have expressed enthusiasm for the courses—and for new books such as the Tlaloques comic.

Graphic novels and picture books may be especially powerful in connecting younger speakers to their heritage. For instance, the Tlaloques comic has become regular reading in the lessons of Guanajuato-based teacher León Rodríguez García. “When we read the stories in the classrooms,” Hekking notes, “all the students were very interested. They said, ‘We want to read the language of our forebears!’”

In recent years, a comic book, *Ar Metlaloque*, (The Tlaloques Hunter), has reimagined Tlaloc’s domain with a twist. The comic weaves in a traditional story from the Mexican state of Querétaro about the spontaneous rainfalls of the mountain Pinal del Zamorano. In the creative adaptation, Tlaloc’s haven includes the Tlaloques, goblin-like helpers who are prone to pranks. They playfully break containers—crack!—and rain pours down unexpectedly onto the arid landscape around Zamorano.

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The book is the first of its kind written in Hñáñho, the language of the Nñáñho people, as well as in Spanish and English. It represents a larger, ongoing effort to preserve the people's culture, which is under threat as speakers decline and cultural bonds erode from centuries of colonial policies.

Conclusion: Hñáñho language experience revealed us - to promote indigenous mother tongues introduction comic books in academics help generating interest in people.

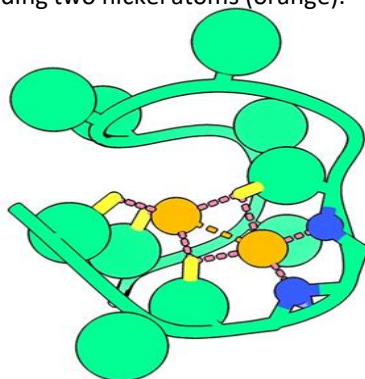
Biological Anthropology

7. Scientists Identify Chemical Reaction That May Have Triggered Life on Earth.

What was first metabolic reaction might have looked like remains an area of speculation. Now a team of researchers from Rutgers University and The City College of New York in the US have identified a protein that may have played a crucial role in getting life as we know it started – a simple peptide they're calling nickelback- mix of organic molecules began to be powered from within, forming something we might start to think of as biological.

The protein's backbone(nickelback), consisting of a chain of amino acids and two nitrogen atoms bonded to a pair of nickel atoms.

A rendering of the nickelback peptide, with nitrogen atoms (blue) bonding two nickel atoms (orange).



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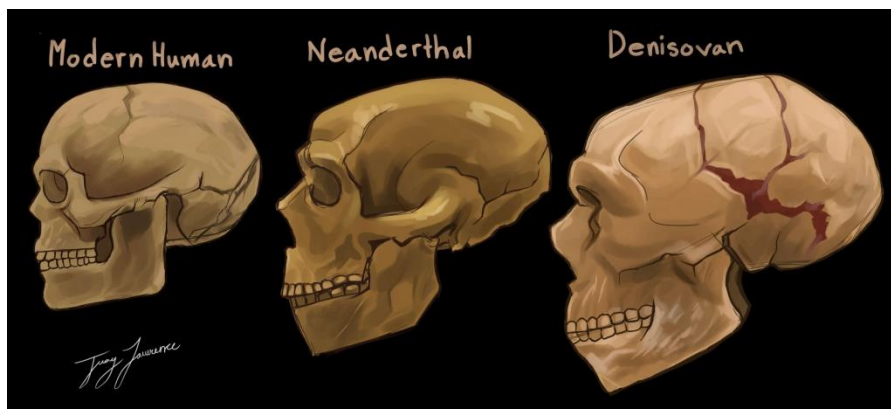
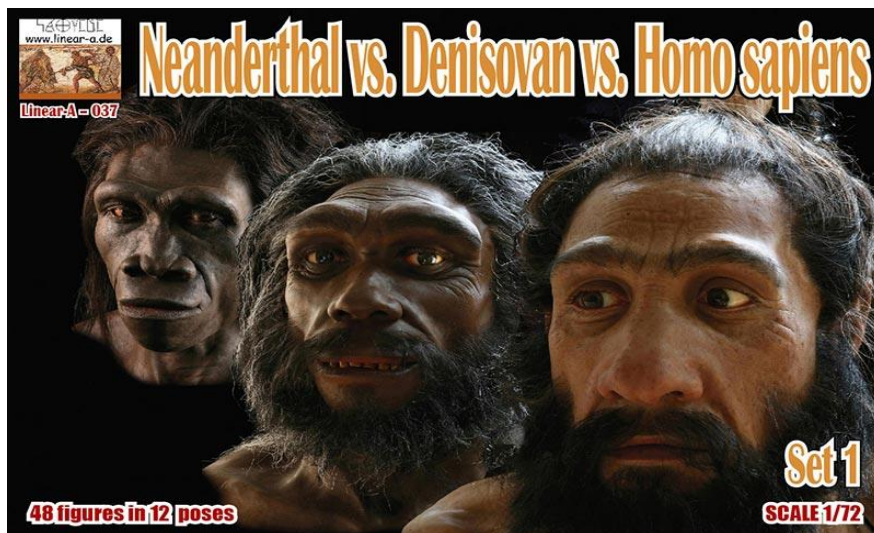
Scientists believe that sometime between 3.5 and 3.8 billion years ago there was a tipping point, something that kick-started the change from prebiotic chemistry – molecules before life – to living, biological systems.

To this basic scaffold, two nickel atoms could attach and mirror the basic activity of the nickel-iron group in [NiFe] hydrogenase and the nickel-nickel cluster in acetyl-CoA synthase, two ancient proteins that continue to play major roles in metabolism today.

Nickel would have been an abundant metal in the first oceans on our planet. Crucially, when bound to the peptide, nickel atoms act as a catalyst in the release of hydrogen gas, which would have been a vital source of energy billions of years ago. Crucially, the team was able to show all of these processes working in the lab.

This is important because, while there are many theories about the origins of life, there are very few actual laboratory tests of these ideas

8. Are Asian's descendants of Denisovans ?



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A finger bone and some teeth found in the frigid Denisova Cave in Siberia's Altai Mountains and Laotian cave tooth shows these long-lost relatives of Homo sapiens inhabited a wider area and range of environments than we previously knew, confirming hints found in the DNA of modern human populations from Southeast Asia and Australasia.

Who were the Denisovans ? : Little is known about these distant cousins of modern humans except that they once lived in Asia, were related to and interacted with the better-known Neanderthals, and are now extinct.

The first traces of Denisovans were only found in 2010, with the discovery of an innocuous finger bone in remote Denisova Cave. The extreme cold of the cave meant some ancient DNA was preserved in the bone—and the DNA revealed the finger had belonged to an unknown species of human. This discovery changed the course of human evolutionary studies, and the newly discovered humans were named Denisovans and were dated to between 195,000 and 52,000 years ago. Meanwhile, it was found that genes from Denisovans survived in modern-day people from Southeast Asia and Australasia. This implied that the Denisovans had dispersed over a far larger area than anticipated.

Evidences of Denisovans

- Asia : 160,000-year-old Denisovan jawbone surfaced on the Tibetan Plateau
- SouthEast Asia : Laos in Tam Ngu Hao 2 (or Cobra Cave)- female, human—probably between 3.5 and 8.5 years old- A Denisovan who lived between 164,000 and 131,000 years ago in the warm tropics.

An Ancient human hotspot : This fossil represents the first discovery of Denisovans in Southeast Asia and shows that Denisovans were at least as far south as Laos. This is in agreement with the genetic evidence found in modern-day Southeast Asian populations. They may have been just at home in the balmy tropical climates of Laos as the icy conditions of Northern Europe and the high-altitude environments of the Tibetan Plateau. This suggests the Denisovans were very good at adapting to diverse environments. It would seem that Southeast Asia was a hotspot of diversity for humans. At least five different species set up camp there at different times: Homo erectus, the Denisovans/Neanderthals, Homo floresiensis, Homo luzonensis, and Homo sapiens.

Conclusions:

- While Neanderthal lived in Middle East and Europe – the contemporary of Neanderthal i.e Denisovans lived in Asia , South East Asia and Russia.
- Denisovans habituated for tropical , Subtropical and Ice Climate of Siberia reveals us their habitat ability unlike Neanderthal specialized for cold climate
- South East Asia might be hotspot in human evolution with multiple species living together

9. Did Neanderthals Make Art?

What makes us human? A lot of people would argue it is the ability of our species to engage in complex behaviour such as using language, creating art and being moral. But when and how did we first become “human” in this sense? While skeletal remains can reveal when our ancestors first became “anatomically modern”, it is much harder for scientists to decipher when the human lineage became “behaviourally modern”.

One of the key traits of behavioural modernity is the capacity to use, interpret and respond to symbols. We know that *Homo sapiens* have been doing this for at least 80,000 years. But its predecessor in parts of Eurasia, the Neanderthal, a human ancestor that became extinct around 40,000 years ago, has traditionally been regarded as uncultured and behaviourally inferior. Now our new study, published in *Science*, has challenged this view by showing that Neanderthals were able to create cave art.

Cave art: used uranium-thorium dating to investigate cave art from three previously discovered sites in Spain. In La Pasiega, northern Spain, we showed that a red linear motif is older than 64,800 years. In Ardales, southern Spain, various red painted stalagmite formations date to different episodes of painting, including one between 45,300 and 48,700 years ago, and another before 65,500 years ago. In Maltravieso in western central Spain, we showed a red hand stencil is older than 66,700 years. These results demonstrate that cave art was being created in all three sites at least 20,000 years prior to the arrival of *Homo sapiens* in western Europe. They show for the first time that Neanderthals did produce cave art, and that it was not a one off event. Excitingly, the types of paintings produced (red lines, dots and hand stencils) are also found in caves elsewhere in Europe so it would not be surprising if some of these were made by Neanderthals, too.

However, critics have been challenged on methodological grounds (choosing uranium-thorium method—a dispute over the movement of uranium in groundwater in the caves) and by the conviction that only modern humans made art.

ENGRAVE BONES: Einhornhöhle (Unicorn Cave) in northern Germany. In 2021, archaeologists announced the recovery of an engraved toe bone of *Megaloceros giganteus*, an extinct deer that could grow to about 7 feet tall, with an antler span of 12 feet! This toe bone is etched with six engravings that form five offset stacked chevrons. The angles formed by the intersecting lines are quite regular, ranging from 92.3 to 100.3 degrees. A second set of four short lines are incised on the proximal end.

These are not cut-marks related to butchery (deer toes are not terribly meaty) and were clearly made intentionally to form a pattern. In this case, the dates aren’t disputed. Radiocarbon dating at the site, and of the bone itself, suggest it is at least 51,000 years old. The authors suggest that the engraving, and possibly the choice of animal, must have symbolic meaning. And art is all about symbolism—representing an idea or object in some other form. For me, that speaks strongly to symbolic thought in Neanderthals.

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However, . In this case, DNA was recently recovered from modern human fossils dating to more than 45,000 years ago at Zlatý Kůň, Czech Republic. The fossils contain long stretches of Neanderthal DNA, suggesting interbreeding occurred before 50,000 years. Some posit that the Neanderthals who exchanged genes with the ancestors of Zlatý Kůň also exchanged knowledge.

Stone Circles: Bruniquel Cave in southwestern France. More than 300 meters inside the cave lie multiple structures constructed from almost 400 stalagmite fragments (also called speleofacts). Two large circular structures, composed of up to four layers of stacked stalagmite fragments, stretch around 2 to 7 meters across and about 40 centimeters high. These are accompanied by several other accumulations of stalagmites. Based on reddening and blackening of some of the fragments, it appears that all of the structures are associated with fire.

Archaeologists dated the structures by looking at the age of broken stalagmites and when they began to regrow. The results consistently pointed to the structures being about 176,500 years old. At that time, the only ancestral human species in France were Neanderthals. According to the researchers, this demonstrates that Neanderthals were capable of complex spatial and social organization.

JEWELRY: At least 23 raptor talons, mostly from the formidable white-tailed eagle, have been found at 10 Neanderthal sites ranging in age from 130,000 to 42,000 years ago.

The talons are scratched with cut marks, indicating they were intentionally removed. Given the lack of meat on an eagle's toe, these weren't food items. Researchers found animal tissue—possibly a remnant of a leather cord—on the surface of one talon found at Krapina, Croatia. This suggests the talon was hung on a bracelet or necklace.

Further evidence of Neanderthal use of birds comes from Fumane, Italy. Raptor wing bones show signs of cutting and scraping for the purpose of removing feathers. We're not sure what they did with the feathers, but one possibility is personal decoration.

Also, in Cueva de los Aviones in Spain, scientists have found perforated, pigmented shells possibly between 115,000 and 120,000 years old. Were these objects of personal adornment? Other shells at the site have multiple pigments inside them, suggesting they functioned as containers to mix colors.

These objects, structures, and paintings are not an exhaustive catalog of Neanderthal symbolism, but you have to admit the evidence is adding up.

Conclusion:

- New founding of Cave paintings in Spain reveal us that Neanderthal modern in technological and behavioral aspects.

10. Healthy Mice Created From 2 Fathers in Radical Gene-Editing Breakthrough



Katsuhiko Hayashi from Osaka University told the Human Genome Editing conference that they have created mice with two fathers in a breakthrough that could someday be replicated in humans. - that he achieved the this breakthrough after changing the chromosomes in a male cell from XY to XX.

To make the female egg, the scientists used male skin cells with X and Y chromosomes and reprogrammed them so they would turn into so-called pluripotent stem cells, which are cells that can turn into any other type of cell.

They then deleted the Y chromosomes in the cells and duplicated the cells' X chromosomes, before prompting the cells to turn into egg cells with two X chromosomes. "The trick of this, the biggest trick, is the duplication of the X chromosome," We really tried to establish a system to duplicate the X chromosome. The technique was used to create seven mice pups, which scientists said appeared healthy.

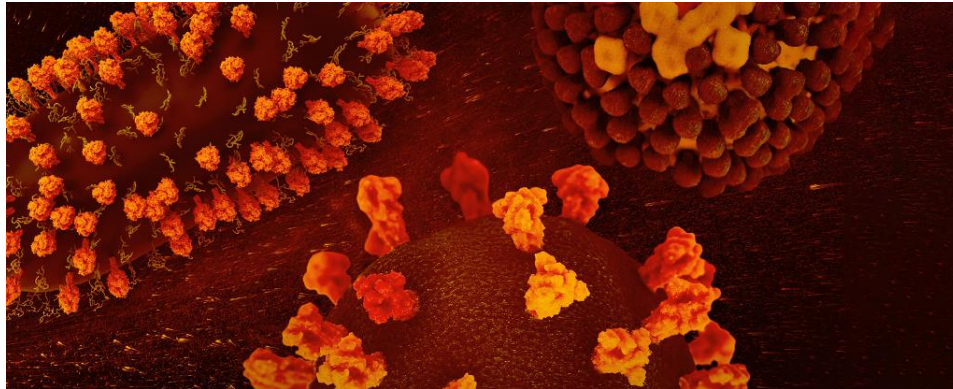
He told the BBC he would love to see the technology offer fertility options to same-sex partnerships of all genders down the line. The technique could also help women and people with two X chromosomes who have a genetic issue with one of the X chromosomes to have children, he said.

It may be possible, but is it ethical? : If the technology would progress to that point, it would be up to society to decide whether we'd want to allow humans to use it to create children. Using germline gene editing in humans – when DNA is altered in a way that the manipulation done by scientists will be passed on to the offspring of the children themselves – has typically been a firm red line for scientists. When scientist He Jankui crossed that line in 2019 and announced he had edited the genes of two babies, he was met with international admonishment and sentenced to prison time. Still, if Hayashi's research can open up new possibilities for human reproduction, the technology may be considered in the future.

Conclusion :

- It has potential applications in human – specially homosexual couples would get their progeny.
- It highlighted medical ethics and anti-evolutional and anti-religious altering genes.

11. Why many viruses seems to be emerging right now?



From the widespread outbreak of mpox (formerly called monkeypox) in 2022, to the evolving bird flu situation, to recent cases of Marburg virus in Equatorial Guinea. We've been regularly hearing about outbreaks of newly emerging or re-emerging viruses. Answer is that both the incidence of virus outbreaks increasing and improved technology developed to track more viruses that already in existing among human societies.

There are an estimated 1.67 million viruses yet to be identified that currently infect mammals and birds. Of these, it is thought that up to 827,000 have the potential to infect humans.

To understand how viruses emerge, we need to go back to the beginning of life on Earth. There are several theories about how the first viruses came into existence, but they all agree that viruses have been around for billions of years, evolving alongside living things. When there's disruption to this stable co-evolution, that's when we can run into trouble.

- The main drivers of viral emergence in the human population are humans and their actions. Agriculture became a common practice more than 10,000 years ago, and with it humans started having close contact with animals. This presented the opportunity for viruses that naturally infected these animals to "species jump" into humans. This is called zoonosis. Around 75 percent of newly emerging infectious diseases are due to zoonosis.
- As human civilization and technology advanced, the destruction of animal habitats forced animals into new areas in search of food sources. Different species that wouldn't usually have been in contact were now sharing the same environment. Add humans into this equation and you have the perfect recipe for a new virus to emerge.
- Urbanization leads to high population density, creating an ideal environment for viruses to spread. The rapid development of towns and cities often outpaces adequate infrastructure such as sanitation and healthcare, further increasing the likelihood of virus outbreaks.

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- Climate change is also contributing to the spread of viruses. For example, arboviruses (viruses spread by arthropods like mosquitoes) are being detected in new areas because the range of countries mosquitoes can survive in is increasing.
- We've known about these factors for a long time. The emergence of SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID) did not surprise any virologist or epidemiologist. It was a matter of when – not if – a pandemic would occur. What was unexpected has been the scale of the COVID pandemic, and the difficulty of effectively limiting the spread of the virus.
- We also couldn't have predicted the impact that misinformation would have on other areas of public health. Anti-vaccination sentiment in particular has become more commonplace on social media over the past few years, and we're seeing increased rates of vaccine hesitancy.
- There has also been disruption to routine childhood immunization programs, increasing the risk of outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases such as measles.

Conclusion:

- Socio-economic development and population pressure , Climate change contributing exposure of humans to already existing virus
- Preparedness and research on new viruses is key to defend human race

12. Scientists revived a 'zombie' virus frozen for 48,500 years in ice - could still infect other cells

- Scientists revived a 48,500-year-old 'zombie' virus from permafrost and found it was still infectious.
- The virus was tested on amoebae but could indicate more dangerous viruses are lurking in permafrost.

Scientists have revived ancient "zombie" viruses from permafrost and discovered they could still infect living single-celled amoebae. The chances of these viruses infecting animals or humans are unclear, but the researchers say permafrost viruses should be considered a public health threat.

According to CNN, French professor Jean-Michel Claverie found strains of the 48,000-year-old frozen virus from a few permafrost sites in Siberia. The oldest strain, which dated back 48,500 years, came from a sample of soil from an underground lake, while the youngest samples were 27,000 years old. One of the young samples was discovered in the carcass of a woolly mammoth.

Some scientists fear that as climate change warms the Arctic, thawing permafrost could release ancient viruses that haven't been in contact with living things for thousands of years. As such, plants, animals, and humans might have no immunity to them. If there is a virus hidden in the permafrost that we have not been in contact with for thousands of years, it might be that our immune defense is not sufficient, she added. "It is correct to have respect for the situation and be proactive and not just reactive. And the way to fight fear is to have knowledge.

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Ancient bacteria like anthrax may already be thawing back to life. It's not just viruses. Ancient bacteria, too, could be released and reactivated for the first time in up to two million years as permafrost thaws. That's what happened, scientists think, when outbreaks of the bacterial infection anthrax appeared in humans and reindeer in Siberia in 2016. That may be a "more immediate public health concern," according to Calverie's paper.

.13. Menopause Isn't as Responsible For Lost Libido as We Always Thought

A national survey in the United Kingdom suggests less frequent sex in middle age has less to do with fluctuating hormones and more to do with stress and fatigue than many of us have been led to believe.

Of course menopause is still a time of deep physiological change, defined largely by an end to periodic cycles of menstruation and accompanied by a significant decline in estrogen and progesterone. Together with an ongoing drop in testosterone, these are hormones that play a significant role in libido and sexual function.

But just because low sex drive is a common complaint after menopause doesn't mean menopause itself is solely responsible.

"Few studies have taken women's views into account in trying to understand the range of factors influencing sexual experience in middle age.

"The decline in frequency needs to be set in the context of social change as well as individual circumstances."

More women are opting to have children later in life these days. At the same time, their own parents are living longer, leading to a 'sandwich generation' in which middle-aged mothers find themselves financially and emotionally responsible for both their kids and their aging parents.

Many middle-aged women are also juggling a full-time job, and may even be dealing with their own declining health. The combination of all these stresses seems to have left women without much energy to dedicate to a regular and pleasant sex life

14. Depressive Symptoms And Memory Loss in Older Adults Linked to Telomere Shortening



There's a tiny, slow-burning 'fuse' attached to the ends of all our chromosomes, and as we naturally age, each of our cells loses more and more of that life-giving line.

Researchers in South Korea have now shown this fuse, known as the telomere, is unusually short in the cells of elderly people who are relatively healthy but have noticed early signs of depressive symptoms and cognitive decline, such as memory loss.

The randomized controlled trial presents more evidence for the telomere hypothesis of aging, which posits that all cells hit a point where they can no longer divide and replicate.

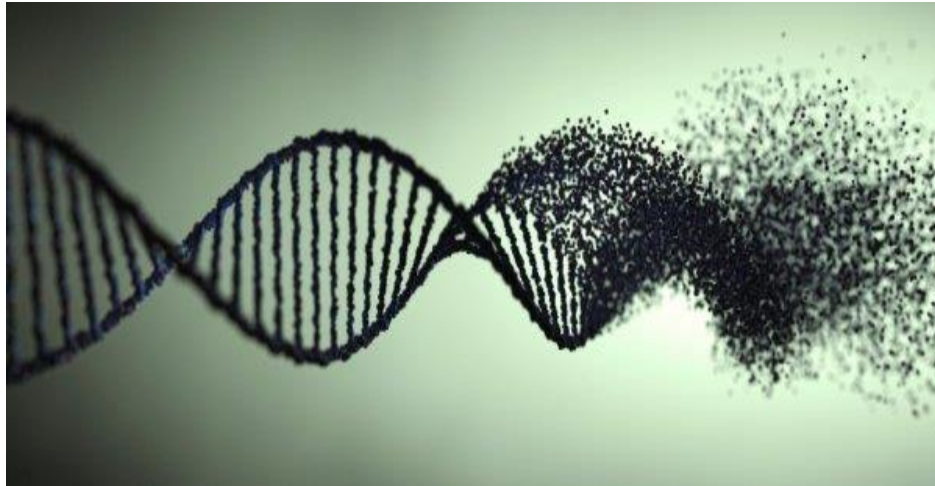
Telomeres are essentially the 'molecular clocks' that tick down to that final zero, and their countdown seems to be sped up by chronic stress and possibly depression.

According to the hypothesis, if the body's recycling system doesn't clear out these zombie cells, the undead can form an 'army' that may contribute to disease just about anywhere in the body.

Whether or not you accept this hypothesis, it is clear that the shrinking telomere is closely related to aging, not just for the cell but for the entire organism.

Numerous studies have shown that the length of telomeres in older individuals is closely aligned with cognitive impairment and depression.

15. Our Genomes Are Full of 'Junk DNA' That Could Be Way More Important Than We Realized



Of the roughly three billion base pairs making up the human genome, only around 2 percent encodes proteins, leaving the remaining 98 percent with less obvious functions. Dismissed by some as useless 'junk DNA', its origins, effects, and potential purpose in the evolution of life has attracted the attention of biologists ever since it was first noticed cluttering up our chromosomes in the 1960s.

Now researchers from Tel Aviv University in Israel have added some vital insights into the reasons why non-coding DNA persists, which could help us better understand the rich variety of genome sizes across the living world.

In 1977, two scientists named Richard Roberts and Phil Sharp independently noticed a good portion of this DNA clutter wasn't just scattered between our genes, but often interrupted them mid-sequence, a discovery that later earned them a Nobel Prize.

Known as introns, they seemed to burden complex cells like ours, while leaving simpler ones – such as those of bacteria – untouched. They also added a lot of labor to the process of translating DNA into something material.

Every time a protein was freshly minted, these interruptions would have to be cut out of the genetic template, requiring the coding instructions to be pieced back together before being interpreted as a protein. The number of introns also happens to differ wildly from species to species; humans have nearly 140,000 introns.

Why hasn't evolution ***cleaned up this mess through natural selection*** to make us more efficient organisms? And why, when genomes have a known natural bias towards deleting instead of adding DNA over time, does 'junk DNA' never seem to get any shorter even after millions of years of evolution?

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"Intriguingly, the opposite has supposedly happened, as eukaryotes have larger genomes, longer proteins, and much larger intergenic regions compared to prokaryotes," the scientists behind this latest study into introns write in their recently published report.

The researchers proposed that deleting any intrusive pieces of DNA around coding regions would likely hurt the animal's survival, as coding sections might also be snipped out at the same time. **"Deletions occurring near the borders occasionally protrude to the conserved region and are thereby subject to strong purifying selection,"** the researchers write. This **"border-induced selection"**, where a neutral sequence sits between coding regions, would therefore create an insertion bias for short, non-coding DNA sequences. Essentially, 'junk DNA' acts like a mutational buffer, protecting regions that contain the more sensitive sequences necessary for coding proteins.

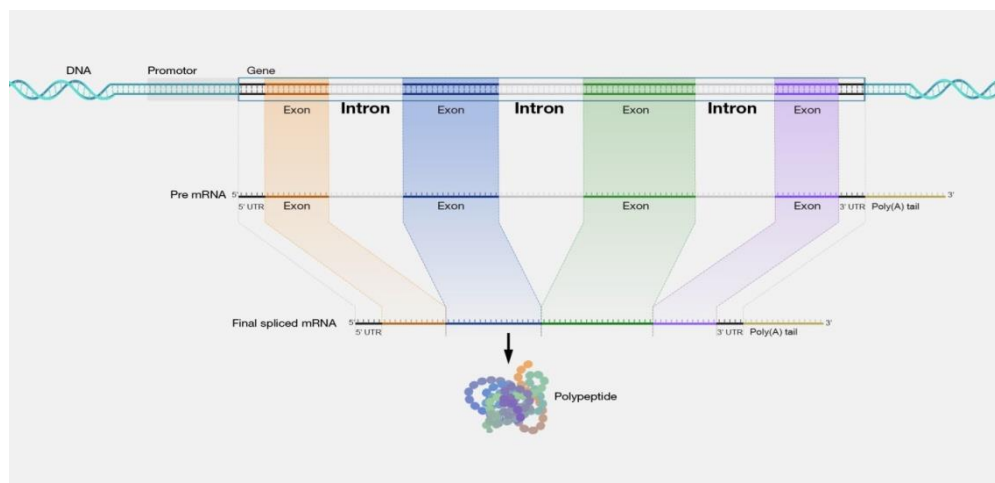
Just where these interruptions come from in the first place is also an area of ongoing research, with **a long history of viruses and outdated genes** suggested as sources.

Much it might not even be non-coding after all, tasked with functions we're simply not yet aware of. In recent years, science has increasingly moved away from describing all introns as 'junk DNA' as more possible functions are discovered, including introns being transcribed into strands of RNA that oversee protein production.

What we might think of as junk could, in time, be seen as genetic treasure. It might seem like a complicated way to build an organism, but with several billion years of evolution under its belt, nature seems to know what its doing.

Brief Info regarding : INTRON

An intron is a region that resides within a gene but does not remain in the final mature mRNA molecule following transcription of that gene and does not code for amino acids that make up the protein encoded by that gene. Most protein-coding genes in the human genome consist of exons and introns.



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Intron: The protein coding sequences for many genes are broken into smaller pieces of coding sequences called exons separated by non-coding sequences called introns. When genes are transcribed, those exons and introns are included in the initial messenger RNA products. However, introns are removed during the process called splicing so only exons are included in the mature mRNA and used to dictate what proteins are produced. In many genes, the introns are much longer than the exons. Introns may contain sequences that regulate how genes are expressed or transcribed and how mRNA is processed.

Conclusion:

- Junk DNA or Introns present in humans are evolutionary result of virus attacks and 'Out Dated' genes
- Always present in middle coding sequence of functional gene to protect this coding regions
- Future may be this junk DNA become functional as evolution proceeded

Indian Society and Civilizations

16. Bihar conducting all caste survey and many parties demanding center for all India level all caste counts.

Caste-based census		Commissions dealing with issues related to OBCs		 The data will aid effective drafting of policies considering many sections of OBCs have not received benefits in proportion to their population. Nitish Kumar , Bihar CM	
YEAR	OUTCOME				
1872	Classified population into Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Rajpoots, other castes based on profession, native Christians, Aboriginal tribes, semi-Hindooised tribes	Kaka Kalelkar Commission (1953)	Identified 2,399 backward castes, including 837 most backward castes. Recommended caste-based census in 1961. Report rejected. Government says no objective tests for identifying backward class.	Caste census will be in national interest and will turn out to be a historic pro-poor measure. It will help the most deprived. If animals and trees can be counted, why not people? Tejashwi Yadav , RJD Leader	
1901	1,642 castes	Mandal Commission (1979)	Identified OBCs comprise 52% of India's population, granted 27% reservation in government jobs.		
1931	4,147 castes			There are several practical and technical difficulties in conducting a caste census, but still BJP supported it as a matter of principle. Sushil Kumar Modi , Senior BJP leader	
1941	Census curtailed due to World War II	Rohini Commission (2017)	Recommends 27% reservation for OBCs be divided into four sub-categories. Finds 97% of jobs and educational seats went to 25% sub-castes. 10% of the 2,633 OBC communities cornered 25% of these jobs, while 983 communities had zero representation.		
2011*	Over 46 lakh caste names, sub-castes, surnames and gotras. Caste numbers withheld citing inaccuracies.			The Government of India has decided as a matter of policy not to enumerate caste-wise population other than SCs and STs in census. Nityanand Rai , Union Minister of State for Home Affairs	
*socio-economic and caste census					

The OBC vote in Lok Sabha elections		1996	1998	1999	2004	2009	2014	2019
Congress		25.00%	21.00%	25.00%	24.00%	24.00%	15.00%	15.00%
BJP		19.00%	26.00%	23.00%	23.00%	22.00%	34.00%	44.00%
Regional Parties		49.00%	44.00%	41.00%	43.00%	42.00%	43.00%	27.00%

SOURCE: LOKNITI/CSDS

What are the benefits of caste census?

Many advocates and politicians are of the opinion that a caste census in India would only benefit the country.

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- The rationale is simple, according to them. A modern State cannot but count every category of citizens that it recognises for purposes of any social policy.
- India's social equality programmes cannot be a success without the data and a caste census would help fix that.
- Due to the lack of data, there is no proper estimate for the population of OBCs, groups within the OBCs and more. The Mandal Commission estimated the OBC population at 52 per cent, while some others have pinned the OBC population from 36 to 65 per cent.
As Yogendra Yadav puts it: The census would 'besides resolving the needless mystery about the size of the OBC population, census enumeration would yield a wealth of demographic information (sex ratio, mortality rate, life expectancy), educational data (male and female literacy, ratio of school-going population, number of graduates) and policy relevant information about economic conditions (house-type, assets, occupation) of the OBCs'.
- Similarly, a caste-based census could go a long way in bringing a measure of objectivity to the debate on reservations. According to the Rohini Commission, which was formed to look into equitable redistribution of the 27 per cent quota for OBCs, noted that there are around 2,633 castes covered under the OBC reservation. However, the Centre's reservation policy from 1992 doesn't take into account that there exists within the OBCs, a separate category of Extremely Backward Castes, who are much more marginalised.
- Its absence also results in inadequate budgetary allocations by governments to OBCs.
- "We have no idea how many OBC communities actually exist in India, leave alone their numbers. There are so many smaller communities, migrant groups which don't make it to the census.

Why conducting a caste census is a herculean task?

- If a caste census was to be carried out, one could be sure that the exercise would be Administrative burden and more taxing. While carrying out the enumeration, officials would have to ask each person which caste they belonged to.
- The names of some castes are found in both the list of Scheduled Castes and list of OBCs. Also, there may be issues as some people would be spelling their caste differently from others and that would lead to an inaccurate count.
- Another issue with collecting the information is that those who collect the data simply record the answer. The enumerator is not an investigator or verifier. The enumerator has no training or expertise to classify the answer as OBC or otherwise. - Data integrity which can't be used for official purposes without verification.
- These issues then give rise to the fact that the census questionnaire would have to be modified to add the names of all the castes – not an easy exercise, as many haven't even been listed. This would lead to a further delay in carrying out the mammoth exercise, which has already been put off by a year due to the coronavirus pandemic.
- Also, a change in the questionnaire would lead to more money being spent – not only to print the new copies, but also to train the enumerator to add the new caste.

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Challenges

- But, even as the voices supporting a caste-based census, there are still some who believe that such a count would reveal how the OBC population is well in excess of the 52 per cent identified by the Mandal commission, spurring demands for more quotas.
- There are others who state that in the 21st century India should be discussing 'let's do away with caste' rather than further divide India on those lines. They believe that the caste census will create further divisions within the society.
- Additionally, reservations that were implemented for 10 years have continued for 75 years and a caste-based census would only lead to a demand for more.
- The opponents of the exercise sum it up thus -- a caste-based Census could halt India in its tracks, hurting its chances of becoming a global superpower.

17. Shudra (lowered caste) or Backward Caste which vocabulary good.

Context : A recent report by The News Minute sparked controversy by referring to Tamil Nadu and Kerala Chief Ministers MK Stalin and Pinarayi Vijayan as “Shudra” and “lowered caste” during their participation in an anti-caste event in Kerala. Many objected to the two terms, considering them to be derogatory and demeaning.

The Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) have been recognised as the most marginalised groups and granted special protections under the Constitution. But these categories do not include all historically disadvantaged caste groups.

To address the issues faced by these groups, Article 340 of the Constitution recognises them as the Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (SEBC). The SEBCs are not considered ‘untouchables’ nor are they tribal. They are not part of the dominant castes who are now considered potential beneficiaries of the Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) reservation.

Mandal Commission, formed in 1979 used the phrase ‘Other Backward Classes’ or the OBCs for this section of people. Depending on the 1931 Census report, various surveys, and field studies, the commission estimated that these social groups constitute 52 per cent of India’s total population. The OBCs are now recognised as a separate category under the Constitution and are entitled to various protections and benefits. The term OBC has also been constitutionally accepted, especially after related amendments. This is where we call the social group than that described as “Shudras”. But, Why ?

- First, The language we use to discuss caste-based issues can impact the way we view and understand the system’s dynamics. The term “lower caste” — and to some extent, Shudra — puts the gaze on the oppressed, implying that their caste status is responsible for their oppression. This language reinforces the idea that some castes are inherently inferior, perpetuating discrimination and inequality. But the term “lowered caste” puts the blame on the perpetrators and challenges the system’s enduring and entrenched nature, emphasising

the need for social justice. Using such language promotes a more equitable and inclusive society.

- Second, it recognises systemic injustice while situating it in history. Usage of the term 'lowered caste' recognises the systemic injustice that certain communities have faced in India. It emphasises the fact that the caste system has subjected some groups to marginalisation, discrimination, and violence. In contrast, 'Shudra' carries a complex religious-textual connotation, reinforcing the caste system's hierarchical nature and implying that certain castes are inherently inferior.
- Third, it challenges the caste system hierarchy. It reframes the discussion away from the inherent inferiority of certain castes and toward systemic injustices. This is a crucial step to promote social justice and equality in India.
- Fourth, 'lowered castes' promotes sensitivity and awareness about caste-based issues. And in doing so, the term promotes a more inclusive and equitable society where all individuals are treated with dignity and respect.
- Lastly, it encourages responsibility and accountability for addressing caste-based discrimination and inequality. By placing the blame on the system, it points to a need for transformation.

18. Karnataka scraps 4% Muslim quota reservation meant for minority community

Case Study on Muslim minority : Karnataka scraps 4% Muslim quota reservation meant for minority community and distributed equally between Lingayats, Vokkaligas; economically-backward Muslims will have to compete in 10% EWS pool , general most forward castes are belonged.

Significance: The Sachar Committee on the social, economic and educational status of the Muslim community of India concluded that the conditions facing Indian Muslims was below that of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

Conclusion: Need special attention to uplift rather than allowing them to compete with forward castes with better social network connections

19. No equal rights over inheritance from parental property between son and daughters.

Issues: According to Muslim Personal Law- No equal rights over inheritance from parental property between son and daughters.

According to Muslim Personal Law – daughter only inherits half of value of what inherited by son. This lead to economic deprivation of Muslim women. Allowing uniform civil code such as the marriage registered under Special Marriage Act (SMA) , so that principles of the secular Act could apply to matters of inheritance in his family, and enable his daughters to inherit equal to that of sons under the Indian Succession Act, 1925.

20. Waqf institutions among Muslim minorities

Waqf is a type of charitable endowment in Islamic law where the ownership of a property is transferred to Allah and the property is permanently dedicated for religious or charitable purposes. The person making the waqf (known as waqif) may specify the purposes for which the income generated by the property should be used. This could include supporting the poor and needy, maintaining a mosque or other religious institution, providing education, or funding other charitable causes.

In this way, waqf is considered a form of religious charity that allows individuals to contribute to the welfare of society and earn spiritual rewards. Waqf properties are managed by a waqf board, which is responsible for ensuring that the income generated by the property is used in accordance with the wishes of the waqif and Islamic principles.

The concept of waqf has its roots in early Islamic history, with the practice established during the time of Prophet Muhammad. During the Islamic Golden Age, waqf institutions played a critical role in the development of Islamic scholarship and education. Waqfs in India date back to the beginning of the Delhi Sultanate.

In 1954, the Jawaharlal Nehru government passed the Waqf Act, which led to the centralisation of waqfs. Under the Act, the government established the Central Waqf Council in 1964.

In 1995, the law was amended to allow the formation of waqf boards in each state and union territory. The Central Waqf Council serves as an advisory body to the Centre on matters related to waqf properties. Any dispute is decided by a waqf property tribunal headed by a member of the state service and two other members (not necessarily Muslims). Some states like Bihar have separate Shia and Sunni waqf boards.

Today, after the Armed Forces and the Railways, the waqf is the largest landowner in India.

The dismal performance of waqf boards raises a question on the purpose of these institutions.

- Waqf properties are not generating enough profit for the community, and there have been several allegations of corruption and mismanagement since Independence. Each state has its own story to tell, from Uttar Pradesh to West Bengal. In September 2022, AAP MLA Amanatullah Khan, Delhi Waqf Board chairman, was arrested for alleged misappropriation of waqf funds and other irregularities. Last month, the Centre seized 123 waqf properties.
- The waqf board has become a tool to save the interest of elite (Ashraaf) Muslims and ordinary Indian Muslims get nothing out of it.
- Ashraaf have been serving their own interest by using the numerical strength and marginalised status of Pasmanda in the name of minority politics. The waqf board is no exception. Like all other Muslim institutions in India, waqf boards are also ruled by Ashraafs and have negligible participation of Tribals, Dalits and Backward Muslims.
- Pasmanda Muslims also bear the brunt of reaction coming from other communities over special privileges given to waqf boards by the 1995 Act

21. The Pasmanda Muslims and their problems

Pasmanda has become an umbrella identity used by backward, Dalit, and tribal Muslims to push back against caste-based discrimination against them within the community. The term 'Pasmanda Muslims' was first used in 1998 by Ali Anwar Ansari when he founded the Pasmanda Muslim Mahaz. According to the founder, Pasmandas include Dalits as of now, but all Pasmandas are not Dalits.

What is the history of the Pasmanda Movement?

The movement to ensure social justice for Pasmandas, and the recurrent use of the term, gathered pace in the post-Mandal era. Its best known flag-bearers in the period before Independence were Abdul Qayyum Ansari and Maulana Ali Hussain Asim Bihari, both of whom belonged to the julaha (weaver) community. Both these leaders opposed the communal politics being propagated at the time by the Muslim League, and challenged the League's claim to represent all Muslims. The movement actually began in 1910 onwards. These were reformist in nature, but also acted like pressure groups led by upwardly mobile lower caste communities.

Are Muslims divided along caste lines in India?

Muslim society in India consists of several status groups or biradaris that are broadly sorted in three categories:

- **Ashrafs** (the 'noble' elite or the 'honorable ones') – They are Muslims who either claim to have a foreign pedigree, descendants of Muslims from Arabia, Persia, Turkey, Afghanistan (Syeds, Sheikhs, Mughals and Pathans), or who are upper-caste converts from Hinduism (Rajput, Gaur, Tyagi Muslims among others).
- **Ajlafs**(backward Muslims), – They are middle-caste converts, who were into ritually "clean" occupations. The momins (weavers), darzi or idiris (tailors), rayeens or kunjara (vegetable sellers) fall in the Ajlaf bracket.
- **Arzals** (Dalit Muslims).– They are from the lowest, "untouchable" castes like halalkhors, helas, lalbegis or bhangis (scavengers), dhobis (washer-men), nais or hajjams (barbers), chiks (butchers), and faqirs (beggars).

They were first recorded in the 1901 census. While Islam does not mandate the creation of such groups, these caste categories are a lived reality for Muslims across the country

What is Rajinder Sachar Committee Report?

It was formed in 2005 to study social, economic and educational condition of Indian Muslims. According to his report, one can discern three groups among Muslims:

- Those without any social disabilities, the Ashrafs;
- Those equivalent to Hindu OBCs, the Ajlafs, and

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- Those equivalent to Hindu SCs, the Arzals.

Those who are referred to as Muslim OBCs combine Ajlafs and Arzals.

What is the Constitutional status of those muslims?

- The Constitution (Scheduled Caste) Order, 1950, had restricted Scheduled Caste (SC) status to Hindus, keeping Dalit from other religions out of its ambit.
- The order was later amended (in 1956 and 1990) to include Sikhs and Buddhists.
- The implementation of the report of the Mandal Commission brought the non-Ashrafs, Ajlafs, and Arzals, under the OBC category.
- The National Commission for Religious and Linguistic Minorities, known as the Justice Ranganath Mishra Commission, which submitted its report in May 2007, acknowledged that the caste system impacted all religious communities in India, including Muslims.

How they are demographically distributed?

- In the absence of a caste census, a clear estimate of the present-day numbers and demographic distribution of Pasmanda Muslims is not available.
- The Sachar Committee in its report put the number of OBC and SC/ST Muslims at 40% (all India 2004-05).
- Pasmanda activists and scholars do not agree with this figure.
- They claimed that pasmandas' make up 80-85% of the total Muslim population in India.
- This broadly tallies with the 1871 census that said only 19% of Muslims in India were upper caste, while 81% were made up of the lower castes.

What are the demands of the Pasmanda Muslims?

- Pasmanda Muslims say that despite their overwhelming numerical strength within the community, they are under-represented in jobs, legislatures and government-run minority institutions, as well as community-run Muslim organizations.
- Pasmandas are also opposed to the demand for giving religion-based reservation to the entire Muslim population, arguing that it ignores unequal access to state resources within the community.
- The major Pasmanda demands include conducting a caste census, restructuring of the existing reservation categories, and state support for artisans, craftsperson, and agricultural laborers, who are among the most impoverished groups in the community.
- They demanded that Dalit Muslims be included in the SC list and the OBC quota be redesigned to create an Extremely Backward Castes (EBCs) category at the Centre and the state level to include the most backward Muslims along with Hindu EBCs.
- As an example, the Pasmandas hold up the Bihar model, where a separate MBC category was carved out within the OBC list and most backward Muslim castes, according to the Sachar committee was placed in that category.

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- Haryana, Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and UP — these five states have Meo Muslims who need to be included in the ST category.

Tribal and Other Depressed Classes

22. Andhra Pradesh passed resolution to provide SC status for Dalit Christians

- **Issue :** A.P. passes resolution to provide SC status for Dalit Christians and centre has formed a three-member Commission under Justice K.G. Balakrishnan, the former Chief Justice of India to examine whether the Scheduled Caste (SC) status can be accorded to Dalits who have converted to religions other than Sikhism or Buddhism.

Current status of reservation:

- The Constitution recognised only Hindus as SCs as per scheduled caste order of 1950.
- It was amended to include Dalits converted to Sikhism and Dalits converted to Buddhism in 1956 and 1990 respectively.
- The government rejected the possibility of including Dalit Christians as members of SCs in 2019 after several petitions.

Why Dalit Muslims and Christians not included:

- The original rationale behind giving reservation to Scheduled Castes was the centuries of sufferings these sections had gone through because of the social evil of untouchability, which was practiced among Hindus.
- Under Article 341 of the Constitution, the President may specify the castes, races or tribes or parts of or groups within castes, races or tribes which shall be deemed to be Scheduled Castes.
- However the reservation is not based on religion as the rights of a person belonging to a Scheduled Tribe are independent of his/her religious faith.
- Also, several Christian and Muslim communities have been included in the Central and state lists of OBCs after the implementation of the Mandal Commission report.

Arguments in favour of extending dalit reservation:

- The change in religion does not change social exclusion.
- The social hierarchy and specifically caste hierarchy continues to remain within Christianity and Muslims due to intermingling of cultures and traditions over centuries.
- The Sachar Committee Report observed that the social and economic situation of Dalit Muslims and Dalit Christians did not improve after conversion.

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- The Ranganath Misra Commission, recommended that SC status should be completely de-linked from religion and Scheduled Castes should be made fully religion-neutral like Scheduled Tribes.

Arguments against extending dalit reservation:

- SC status is for communities suffering from social disabilities arising out of the practice of untouchability, which was prevalent in Hindu religion and its branches.
- Any such move will significantly increase the population of SCs across the country.
- Dalit Buddhists, Dalits converted to Islam or Christianity cannot be categorised as a single ethnic group.
- Extending Dalit reservation can be misunderstood internationally as attempt to impose caste system upon Christians and Muslims.
- Christians and Muslims of Dalit origin had lost their caste identity by way of their conversion.

23. Karnataka cabinet adopted a resolution to recommend to the Union government to divide the hiked 17% reservation for Scheduled Castes.

Issues: Karnataka cabinet adopted a resolution to recommend to the Union government to divide the hiked 17% reservation for Scheduled Castes (SC) in the State giving SC (Left) 6%, SC (Right) 5.5%, SC (Touchable) 4.5%, and SC (Others) 1%.

Conclusion: This way of Division among SC's based on their level of socio-economic backwardness along with creamy layer will do more justice. It should be applied in every state.

24. Tribal women empowerment.

Issues : women from the Scheduled Tribes are excluded (Section 2(2) of the Act excludes women of Scheduled Tribes) when applying provisions of the Hindu Succession Amendment Act, 2005, which gives daughters equal right to the inheritance of their father or the Hindu Undivided Family (HUF). Lead them economically vulnerable and dependent on the male

25. Merger of Schools Run by Adi Dravidar and Tribal Welfare (ADTW) By Tamil Nadu Government

Merger of Schools Run by Adi Dravidar and Tribal Welfare (ADTW) By Tamil Nadu Government into general school administration negative impact tribal literacy.

Issues to be consider before merging

- Inadequate consultations – Lack of the consultation with the stake holders in school education .

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- Prolonged indifference – Filling of vacancies, ensuring transparent procedures for promotions and transfers should be addressed first before the merger.
- Discrimination – Merging the schools especially in the Southern districts may increase discrimination towards scheduled castes.
- Reduced funding – The merger might result in reduced funding for special schools.
- Non- addressal of major issues -Without addressing the prolonged negligence and widespread irregularities, the merger would only result in them being denied the special focus they deserve.

26. Tribal protest over large dam on Siang River in Arunachal Pradesh

Tribal protest over large dam on Siang River in Arunachal Pradesh. Two Arunachal Pradesh-based organisations, including a farmers' collective, have asked the State Government to scrap a deal for executing a proposed 10,000 MW hydropower project on the Siang River.

Accusing the State Government of inking a deal with the National Hydropower Power Corporation for the mega-dam without taking the local people into confidence, Siang Indigenous Farmers' Forum (SIFF) and the Indigenous Rights Advocacy Diband (IRAD) threatened to launch a stir if the project is not scrapped.

SIFF president, Tasik Pangkam said the **Adi community in the Siang River belt** will never accept the mega project that would threaten their existence and make them landless. He cited the example of the Chakma and Hajong people who were displaced by the Kaptai Hydroelectric Project in present-day Bangladesh in the 1960s and were forced to take refuge in India. Apart from submerging villages downstream and displacing the tribal people in Arunachal Pradesh, the 10,000 MW project will affect neighbouring Assam irreversibly.

27. Great Nicobar Development Plan



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Great Nicobar Development Plan, spread over 166 sqkm of the 910 sqkm island, is an under-construction mega infrastructure project for the southern tip of Great Nicobar Island in Andaman Sea of India.

The Project has geostrategic importance for defence, logistics, commerce and industries, eco-tourism, coastal tourism, Coastal Regulation Zone, etc. It has four components:

- Galathea Bay International Container Transshipment Terminal (Galathea Bay ICTT), with 14.2 million TEUs (unit of cargo) capacity eventually.
- Great Nicobar International Airport (GNIA): greenfield airport with peak hour capacity of 4,000 passengers.
- Great Nicobar Gas and Solar Power Plant (Great Nicobar GSPP): with 450-MVA capacity, spread over 16,610 hectares.
- Coastal cities: two new greenfield coastal cities.
- **Impact on Tribal People:** This project will increase the population to over 3.5 lakh (350,000), which may cause a threat to the indigenous communities. Around 1761 inhabitants, including indigenous Shompen people and Nicobarese communities of this island, are likely to be affected by this project. 853 square kilometers of this island is designated as tribal reserve under the Andaman and Nicobar Protection of Aboriginal Tribes Regulation, 1956. This means that the land is meant for exclusive use of the community and others cannot access the area without their express permission. Around 10% of tribal reserve of the island will be affected by this project. According to Forest Rights Act, 2006, Shompen people are legal sole authority to preserve the forest reserve.

28. National Commission for Scheduled Tribes opposing the new Forest Conservation Rules (2022) made by Environment Ministry over the potentially diluting the Forest Rights Act, 2006.

Case Study : National Commission for Scheduled Tribes opposing the new Forest Conservation Rules (2022) made by Environment Ministry over the potentially diluting the Forest Rights Act, 2006.

Context: In the middle of a face-off with the Environment Ministry over the new Forest Conservation Rules (2022) potentially diluting the Forest Rights Act, 2006, the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes has now secured FRA implementation reports of all States and Union Territories by invoking its Constitutional powers to approach the Supreme Court directly.

- After the Union government introduced the new FCR, the panel wrote to the Environment Ministry in September, asking that they be put on hold because they would violate provisions of the FRA.
- In response, Environment Minister Bhupendra Yadav insisted that the rules were framed under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 and that the panel's apprehension was "not legally tenable".

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- The commission in February wrote to the Supreme Court Registrar, invoking powers under Clause 8d of Article 338A.
- Commission was looking to review the overall implementation of the FRA at the ground level, examine rejection of titles and encroachments on forest land. It will propose recommendations to further secure the rights of tribespeople, under its Constitutional mandate.
- This will be part of the report sent to the Office of the President, which will then be tabled in Parliament

Background:

- The new Forest Conservation Rules — notified by the Ministry on June 28 — do not mention the earlier requirement of attaining a gram sabha NOC before diverting forest land for a project.
- They also allow forest rights to be settled after the final approval for forest clearances has been granted by the Centre, a point flagged by critics.
- The settling of forest rights now needs to be carried out by the state government instead of the Centre, as was the case earlier. The state governments will be under even greater pressure from the Centre to accelerate the process of diversion of forest land, critics say.
- The government said that the Forest (Conservation) Rules, 2022, are reformative with an objective to streamline the process of approvals under the Act, and enable the parallel processing under other Acts and Rules including FRA, 2006.
- The Forest Conservation Act of 1980, brought the diversion of forest land for non-forestry purposes under the purview of the central government— prior to this the states were solely in charge of clearing projects and diverting forest land.
- The Forest Conservation Act, laid down the process by which forest diversion could be carried out for projects such as mines or dams.
- But the Forest Conservation Act, and the Forest Advisory Committee, which would decide on the cases of forest diversion, would earlier only look at issues of forest health, protection of wildlife species, major harm to biodiversity, the land required for compensatory afforestation in lieu of the forest diversion etc.
- It was only when the Forest Rights Act, 2006 was enacted that the government mandated that the rights of forest dwelling communities need to be recognised, and that they needed to be consulted before the project was sanctioned.

About the news rules:

- It constituted an Advisory Committee, a regional empowered committee at each of the integrated regional offices and a screening committee at State/Union Territory (UT) government-level. The role of the Advisory Committee is restricted to advise or recommend with regards to grant of approval .
- The MoEFCC has directed the constitution of a project screening committee in each state/UT for an initial review of proposals involving diversion of forest land. The five-

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member committee will meet at least twice every month and will advise the state governments on projects in a time bound manner.

- All non-mining projects between 5-40 hectares must be reviewed within a period of 60 days and all such mining projects must be reviewed within 75 days. For projects involving a larger area, the committee gets some more time — 120 days for non-mining projects involving more than 100 hectares and 150 days for mining projects.
- All linear projects (roads, highways, etc), projects involving forest land up to 40 hectares and those that have projected a use of forest land having a canopy density up to 0.7 shall be examined in the Integrated Regional Office.
- The applicants for diverting forest land in a hilly or mountainous state with green cover covering more than two-thirds of its geographical area, or in a state/UT with forest cover covering more than one-third of its geographical area, will be able to take up compensatory afforestation in other states/UTs where the cover is less than 20%.

About FRA : Scheduled Tribes And Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition Of Forest Rights) Act, 2006:

- The Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006 recognizes the rights of the forest dwelling tribal communities and other traditional forest dwellers to forest resources, on which these communities were dependent for a variety of needs, including livelihood, habitation and other socio-cultural needs.
- The Act encompasses Rights of Self-cultivation and Habitation which are usually regarded as Individual rights; and Community Rights as Grazing, Fishing and access to Water bodies in forests, Habitat Rights for PVTGs etc.
- It also provides rights to allocation of forest land for developmental purposes to fulfil basic infrastructural needs of the community.
- In conjunction with the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Settlement Act, 2013 FRA protects the tribal population from eviction without rehabilitation and settlement.
- The Act further enjoins upon the Gram Sabha and rights holders the responsibility of conservation and protection of bio-diversity, wildlife, forests, adjoining catchment areas, water sources and other ecologically sensitive areas.
- The Gram Sabha is also a highly empowered body under the Act, enabling the tribal population to have a decisive say in the determination of local policies and schemes impacting them.
- Thus, the Act empowers the forest dwellers to access and use the forest resources in the manner that they were traditionally accustomed, to protect, conserve and manage forests, protect forest dwellers from unlawful evictions and also provides for basic development facilities for the community of forest dwellers to access facilities of education, health, nutrition, infrastructure etc.

Objective:

- To undo the historical injustice occurred to the forest dwelling communities

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- To ensure land tenure, livelihood and food security of the forest dwelling Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers
- To strengthen the conservation regime of the forests by including the responsibilities and authority on Forest Rights holders for sustainable use, conservation of biodiversity and maintenance of ecological balance.

29. Tribal Golden Handshakes Scheme

Tribal Golden Handshakes Scheme -More than 700 families, including Adivasis, were incentivised to leave the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve in the Nilgiris as a part of a 'golden handshake' with the Tamil Nadu Forest Department. But many of them complain of broken promises and abandonment.

What is Tribal Golden Handshakes Scheme ?

- Tamil Nadu is home to several indigenous tribal communities, such as the Irula, Kurumba, and Paniya, who have historically lived in forested areas and depended on natural resources for their livelihoods.
- Many of these communities have faced displacement and loss of their traditional lands due to various development projects, including dams, mines, and wildlife sanctuaries.
- The government has attempted to address these issues by providing compensation and resettlement packages to affected communities. The "Golden Handshake Scheme" is one such initiative, which offers a lump sum payment and other benefits to families who agree to relocate.
- The scheme is meant to be voluntary and dignified, and families are supposed to be consulted and involved in the decision-making process. However, there have been concerns raised about the adequacy of compensation and the transparency of the process.
- Some communities have refused to relocate, arguing that the compensation offered is not enough to compensate for the loss of their traditional lands and way of life. Others have accepted the offer but faced difficulties in the resettlement areas, such as inadequate infrastructure and lack of basic amenities.
- The government has also introduced other measures to address the issues faced by tribal communities, such as providing legal recognition to their traditional rights and setting up institutions to promote their welfare.
- However, despite these efforts, the situation of many tribal communities in Tamil Nadu remains precarious, with continuing threats to their livelihoods and cultures. There is a need for more comprehensive and sustainable approaches to address the underlying causes of their marginalization and exclusion.

30. House panel on Tribal Affairs apprehensive about PM-PVTG outlay without population data

Weeks after Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced a ₹15,000-crore expenditure outlay for the **Prime Minister's Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PMPVTG) Development Mission**, the Standing Committee on Social Justice and Empowerment expressed disappointment that such a massive budgetary allocation had been planned when even the Ministry of Tribal Affairs does not have data on PVTG populations in several States and Union Territories.

31. Tribal Poverty elimination through MGNREGA work

Tribal Poverty elimination through MGNREGA work: GoI approach is contradictory for the goal. One way it advised the wage split across different segment other hand it reduced the budget allocations.

The Central Government has issued an advisory to all states to divide the wage payments under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) scheme. The MGNREGA Wages will be divided into separate categories for the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and others from the Financial Year 2021-22.

However, House panel questions huge cut in outlay for MGNREGS Parliamentary Standing Committee on Rural Development seeks rationale behind reduction in allocation for 2023-24 considering the key role the scheme plays for the distressed populace of the country. In different media reports, a concern has been raised that the Union Budget has allocated Rs 60,000 crore for the MGNREGA scheme for 2023-24, which is 18% lower than the Rs 73,000 crore budget estimates of 2022-23.

Conclusion: Less allocation of funds not provide adequate works for tribal people

32. Women Political empowerment is negligible in North-East States:

Women Political empowerment is negligible in North-East States: Women of the Northeast present a picture of contrasts. One part of society allows them the freedom to make choices about work. There are no barriers to entry into the world of work. But when it comes to positions of power, there is a glass ceiling. Top jobs in administration and politics remain an exclusive male preserve. Leadership of tribal bodies, which continue to have a considerable influence, rests with the men. At home, she is shackled to chains of age-old patriarchy and a customary law that relegates her to a secondary position.

Example : first time one Woman elected as MLA in Nagaland since its creation, tell us strong patriarchal when it comes to power matters.

National Integration Issues

33. Demand for Greater Tipraland

The demand has grown louder to carve out a separate state of 'Greater Tipraland' for the indigenous communities in Tripura under Article 2 and 3 of the Constitution.

What is the demand?

- Several tribal outfits and indigenous communities of the north-eastern state of Tripura demand for a separate state of Greater Tipraland.
- The indigenous communities in the region is demanding a separate state as “survival and existence” was at stake.
- Among the 19 notified Scheduled Tribes in Tripura, Tripuris (aka Tipra and Tiprasas) are the largest.
- According to the 2011 census, there are at least 5.92 lakhs Tripuris in the state, followed by Reangs (1.88 lakhs) and Jamatias (83,000).
- They want the Centre to carve out the separate state under Article 2 and 3 of the Constitution.

How did the demand originate?

- Tripura was a kingdom ruled by the Manikya dynasty from the late 13th century until the signing of the Instrument of Accession with the Indian government on October 15, 1949.
- The demand mainly stems from the change in the demographics of the state.
- The indigenous communities were reduced to a minority due to the displacement of Bengalis from the erstwhile East Pakistan between 1947 and 1971.
- Their population reduced from 63% in 1881 to 31% by 2011.
- They have also been dislodged from land reserved for them by the penultimate king of the Manikya dynasty Bir Bikram Kishore Debbarman.
- In the intervening decades, ethnic conflict and insurgency gripped the state, which shares a nearly 860-km long boundary with Bangladesh.

What has been done to address the grievances of indigenous communities?

- The Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTADC) was formed under the sixth schedule of the Constitution in 1985 to ensure development and secure the rights and cultural heritage of the tribal communities.
- The TTADC, which has legislative and executive powers, covers nearly two-third of the state's geographical area.
- The council comprises 30 members of which 28 are elected while two are nominated by the Governor.
- Also, out of the 60 Assembly seats in the state, 20 are reserved for Scheduled Tribes.

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- However 'Greater Tipraland' envisages a situation in which the entire TTADC area will be a separate state.
- It also proposes dedicated bodies to secure the rights of the Tripuris and other aboriginal communities living outside Tripura.

34. Nagalism

History Of Naga Insurgency:

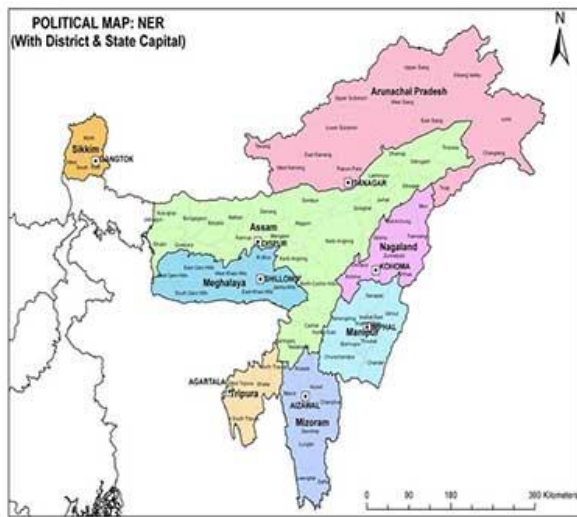
- Residing in the Naga Hills of Assam during the advent of the British and the annexation of Assam in 1820, living in isolation and wanting no interference in their cultural ways and customs, the Nagas did not consider themselves a part of British India.
- The British adopted a way of governance over the Nagas that involved keeping in place to a large extent, their traditional ways of life, customs, and laws while putting British administrators at the top.
- Finding this approach favourable, the colonial government later declared the Naga hills an "excluded area" in the Assam province in 1935.
- At the time of the withdrawal of the British, insecurity grew among the Naga tribes about the future of their cultural autonomy after India's independence, which was accompanied by the fear of the entry of 'plains people' or 'outsiders' into their territory.
- These gave rise to the formation of the Naga Hills District Tribal Council in 1945, which was renamed the Naga National Council (NNC) in 1946.
- Amid uncertainties over the post-independence future of the Nagas, a section of the NNC, led by Naga leader A.Z. Phizo declared the independence of the Nagas on August 14, 1947, a day before India's.
- The underground insurgency began in the early 1950s when Mr. Phizo founded the Naga Federal Government (NFG) and its armed wing, the Naga Federal Army (NFA).
- The Central Government sent the armed forces into Naga areas to curb the insurgency and imposed the contentious Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), which is still in place in parts of Nagaland.
- The Nagas, led by Mr. Phizo, demanding an independent state outside of India, boycotted the 1952 and 1957 general elections and armed clashes grew.
- Unlike multiple other areas in the North East, where groups were accepting some form of autonomy by forming the district and hill councils under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, Nagas rejected this in favour of sovereignty.
- Some leaders among the NNC formed their own group to hold discussions with the government, leading to the formation of the state of Nagaland in 1963 as 16th State.
- This, however, did not satisfy many in the NNC and NFG, who, following years of negotiations with the government, eventually signed the Shillong Accord of 1975, agreeing to surrender arms and accept the Constitution.

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About Naga's?

- The Naga tribes are said to have migrated from southwest China to Burma (now Myanmar) and Thailand, eventually settling in North East India and North West Myanmar.
- The term 'NAGA' was created by the British for administrative convenience to refer to a group of tribes with similar origins but distinct cultures, dialects, and customs.
- The Naga tribes are accumulated in Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, and Myanmar.
- Agriculture is its most important economic activity, accounting for over 70% of its economy. Other significant activities include forestry, tourism, insurance, real estate, and miscellaneous cottage industries.



The Challenges:

- The abrogation of Article 370 has not gone well with the Naga peace process and threatens to destabilize the entire northeast.
- Unlike Kashmir which has a few hundred militants, the NSCN(IM) has nearly 7000 soldiers who are heavily armed.
- The NSCN(IM) has refused to give up on its key demands and is ready to hold back the agreement.
- Meeting the demands would also provoke other ethnic tribes who have also guarded their identities and culture for centuries.

Where do The Peace Talks Stand Now?

- Many rounds of talks: After the 1997 ceasefire with NSCN-IM, there have been over a hundred rounds of talks spanning over 24 years between the Centre and the insurgent group, while a solution is still awaited.

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- The NSCN-K which initially refused to take part in any ceasefire agreement or talks with the Centre later agreed to a two-month ceasefire in 1998, which was followed by countless ceasefire extensions over the years. In 2015, the NSCN-K violated its ceasefire agreement, later signing an extension.
- Holding peace parleys: New Delhi has been holding peace parleys simultaneously with the NSCN-IM, and the Naga National Political Groups (NNPGs) comprising at least seven other extremist groups, including the NSCN (K).
- First step towards an actual Peace Accord: In 2015, it signed a Framework Agreement with the NSCN (I-M), the first step towards an actual Peace Accord.
- Removal of Mr. Ravi as interlocutor: The negotiations hit an impasse in 2020, with the NSCN-IM demanding the removal of Mr. Ravi as interlocutor, accusing him of “high-handedness” and tweaking the agreement to mislead other Naga groups.
- Demand for a separate flag: The NSCN-IM continued to demand a separate flag and constitution for the Nagas and the creation of Nagalim, which it claimed was agreed upon in the Agreement.
- Issues over the Naga flag and constitution: a government official visited the NSCN-IM’s camp in Dimapur to hold closed-door talks but issues over the Naga flag and constitution remain to be ironed out.

Conclusion:

- The Naga issue is very complex, and the NSCN(IM) is in a delicate position. For them, it is difficult to abandon the demand for a Greater Nagalim. But India cannot accept that demand, and a middle path has to be found, which may take some time.
- It is important to understand that there cannot be an accord without the NSCN(IM).
- There is need to delicately close the gap between the IM and NNPGs.
- Some demands that need ironing out include
 - one for a bicameral Assembly with at least 40 nominated members representing different tribes;
 - absorption of cadres as local armed forces or in the Indian paramilitary;
 - setting up of autonomous councils in Naga-dominated areas of neighbouring states; and
 - use of the Naga flag for at least customary events.

35. Kalistan Movement

Recently, armed supporters of self-styled Sikh preacher and pro-Khalistan propagator Amritpal Singh indulged in a scuffle with Punjab police personnel. A few policemen were hurt. Singh, who heads the radical ‘Waris Punjab De’ outfit, has been speaking the language of secession and separatism, evoking calls for the freedom of Punjab and the creation of Khalistan.

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Khalistan issue

- **Political oppression:** Discrimination, marginalization, and oppression of a particular group by the state or dominant group can lead to feelings of disenfranchisement and a desire for autonomy or independence.
- **Economic grievances:** Unequal distribution of resources and economic disparities can fuel demands for greater economic control and self-determination.
- **Cultural and linguistic identity:** The desire to protect and promote a unique cultural or linguistic identity can lead to calls for greater autonomy or even independence.
- **Historical and territorial disputes:** Historical claims to a particular region, border disputes, or territorial grievances can fuel separatist movements.
- **External influences:** External actors, such as neighboring countries or diaspora communities, can influence and support separatist movements in a particular region.

HOW HAS BEEN THE EXPERIENCE OF THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT IN DEALING WITH SEPARATIST TENDENCIES ACROSS THE COUNTRY?

Secession and separatist tendencies are considered illegal in India. Traditionally, the Indian government has adopted a zero-tolerance policy toward any attempt to break the country. Any individual or group advocating for secession or separatism may face legal consequences.

The Indian government has had mixed experience in dealing with secessionist and separatist movements in different parts of the country. Allowing a mixed approach, It has given room to separatists to voice their grievances and at the same time has also dealt with them with an iron hand in other cases. A range of measures like negotiation, force, and development initiatives are adopted.

In some cases, the government's handling of separatist movements has been successful. For example, the government has been able to resolve the Bodo separatist movement in Assam through negotiations and the creation of an autonomous council. Similarly, the Mizoram separatist movement was resolved through negotiations and a peace accord that granted greater autonomy to the region.

However, in other cases, the government's approach has been strict and has been criticized for being heavy-handed. There are allegations of excessive use of force which has led to further exacerbating the tensions. For instance, the government's handling of the Kashmir separatist movement has been controversial, with accusations of human rights abuses by security forces and allegations of lack of political engagement.

Similarly, in dealing with the Khalistan movement in the 1980s and 1990s, the government's approach was characterized by a harsh military crackdown that led to a period of violence and unrest in Punjab. While the situation in Punjab has since stabilized, the use of force has been criticized for exacerbating tensions and leading to further violence.

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In a nutshell, the Indian government's experience in dealing with separatist movements has been mixed, and there is a need for a nuanced and comprehensive approach that takes into account the grievances of the affected communities while ensuring the integrity and unity of the country. Political dialogue at the highest is the key.

The idea of Khalistan, a separate Sikh homeland, has been a controversial topic for decades, particularly in India. Here is a brief timeline of some significant events related to Khalistan:

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE KHALISTAN MOVEMENT

- 1947: India gained independence from British colonial rule and is partitioned into two countries, India and Pakistan.
- 1966: The state of Punjab is divided into three parts, with the Hindi-speaking areas forming the new state of Haryana, and the Punjabi-speaking areas being divided between Punjab and the new state of Himachal Pradesh.
- 1973: The Anandpur Sahib Resolution was passed by the Shiromani Akali Dal, a political party representing Sikhs in Punjab, calling for greater autonomy for Punjab and recognition of the Sikh religion.
- 1980: The Khalistan movement gained momentum as some Sikhs demand a separate homeland for themselves, citing discrimination and economic hardship.
- 1982: Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, a militant Sikh leader, took over the Golden Temple complex in Amritsar and declared it to be the seat of Khalistan.
- 1984: In June, the Indian government launched 'Operation Blue Star' to flush out Bhindranwale and his followers from the Golden Temple complex. The operation resulted in a military siege of the temple and the deaths of hundreds of people, including Bhindranwale.
- 1984: In October, Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was assassinated by her Sikh bodyguards in retaliation for 'Operation Blue Star'. This led to widespread anti-Sikh riots in which thousands of Sikhs were killed in Delhi and other parts of India.
- 1985: The Punjab Police and other security forces began a crackdown on Sikh militants, leading to a period of violence and terrorism in Punjab.
- 1992: The Khalistan movement lost momentum as many of its leaders were arrested or killed by security forces.
- 1995: The Punjab state government signed the Punjab Accord, which granted greater autonomy to the state and promised to address some of the grievances of Sikhs.
- 2002: The Khalistan movement became largely dormant, though some Sikh activists continue to call for a separate homeland.

INDIAN GOVERNMENT POLICY ABOUT THE KHALISTAN ISSUE

The Indian government's policy on the Khalistan issue has been focused on maintaining the territorial integrity and unity of India. The government has consistently rejected demands for a separate Sikh homeland and has taken a hardline stance against any separatist or secessionist movements.

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Currently, the Indian government remains committed to maintaining peace and stability in Punjab and other parts of the country affected by separatist movements. It has implemented measures such as increased security and surveillance to prevent and counter any separatist activities. The government also continues to engage with Sikh community leaders and political parties to address their concerns and grievances within the framework of the Indian Constitution.

WAY FORWARD FOR THE KHALISTAN MOVEMENT

The way forward for the Khalistan movement is a complex issue, and there is no one-size-fits-all solution. However, here are some possible ways forward that could be explored:

- Political engagement: The Khalistan movement leaders could engage in political dialogue with the Indian government to address their grievances and demands within the framework of the Indian Constitution. This could involve negotiations on issues such as greater autonomy for Punjab, sharing of river waters, and distribution of central funds. But, the caveat is to engage and recognize only those sections that have genuine demands.
- Focus on development: The Indian Government could focus on development initiatives for Punjab and its people, such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure. This could help address some of the underlying grievances of the movement.
- It's important to note that any way forward for the Khalistan movement should be peaceful, and democratic and must follow rule of law. Outright violence on the part of Khalistani leaders and total intolerance on part of the Indian government can only complicate the issue. Thus, political dialogue, the formation of a comprehensive policy, and a focus on development initiatives should be the way forward.

36. Recent case studies to be used for Communalism in India

Recent case studies to be used for Communalism in India

- Marriage related: Love Jihad & Ghar Vapsi
- Dressing issues: Hijab in Karnataka
- Food habits: Beef Lynching in incidents Bihar , U.P and Karnataka