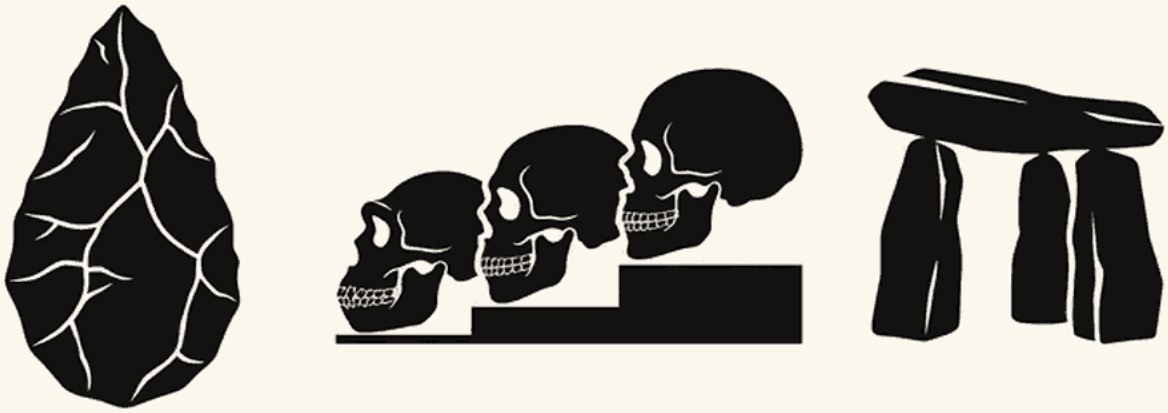
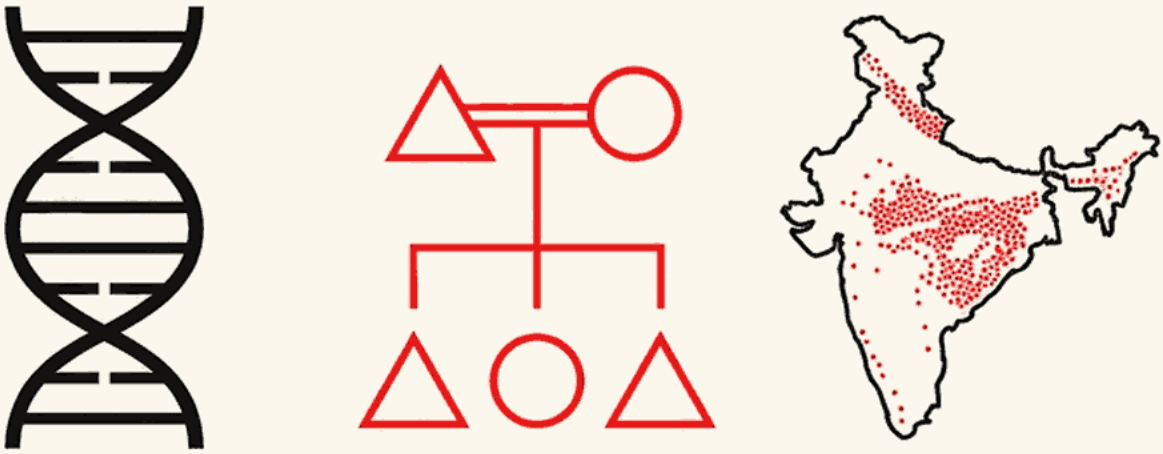
ANTHROSPHERE





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Contents

Units covered this issue: Paper II · 9.2 Paper II · 6.2 Paper I · 1.4 Paper II · 1.3 Paper I · 7 Paper I · 9.7 Paper I · 8 Paper I · 9.8 Paper I · 1.8

1. Women-led fisheries cooperatives in North East India 4
Paper II · 9.2 — supplements the tribal and rural development chapter
revision card 6
2. PMUY energy justice failures for tribal NER communities 8
Paper II · 6.2 — supplements the tribal problems chapter
revision card 10
3. Millet Decline and Revival in Tribal Andhra Pradesh and Odisha 12
Paper II · 6.2 — supplements the problems of tribal communities chapter
revision card 14
4. Denisovan occupation of Bianfu Cave, Yunnan: 134–190 kya 16
Paper I · 1.4 — supplements the human evolution chapter
revision card 17
5. Revising the human-chimpanzee divergence date 18
Paper I · 1.4 — supplements the human evolution chapter
revision card 20
6. Cheriyal Dolls: Commodification of Golla Oral Epic 22
Paper II · 1.3 — supplements the ethno-archaeology in India chapter

revision card 24

7. Magadhi Lokgeet on Dashrath Manjhi as Living Archive 25
Paper I · 7 — supplements the culture, language and communication chapter
revision card 26

8. Climate Change: Ingold, Strathern, Bourdieu, Bonda Reversion 28
Paper I · 9.7 — supplements the ecological anthropology chapter
revision card 30

9. Tharu Commensality as Participant Observation Entry-Point 31
Paper I · 8 — supplements the fieldwork tradition and research methods chapter
revision card 32

10. Paediatric and Adolescent HIV Burden 2025 33
Paper I · 9.8 — supplements the epidemiological anthropology chapter
revision card 35

11. Betel nut use: Pleistocene Sulawesi cave evidence 36
Paper I · 1.8 — supplements the prehistoric archaeology and chronology chapter
revision card 38

12. Oraon Material Culture: Technological Succession and Continuity 40
Paper II · 1.3 — supplements the ethno-archaeology in India chapter
revision card 42

Women-led fisheries cooperatives in North East India

Source: Economic & Political Weekly (EPW), Vol LXI No 38, September 19, 2026 · Visibility and Voice: Collectivisation as Catalyst for Women's Empowerment in North East Fisheries Sector
Paper II · 9.2 — supplements the tribal and rural development chapter

Summary

Sen, Ngaihte, and Boro of NITI Aayog examine why high female labour participation in North East India's fisheries economy fails to produce asset ownership, credit access, or governance roles. Women constitute roughly 44% of the national fisheries workforce but only 10% of registered fish farmers, a gap the authors term under-formalisation rather than under-representation. In the NER, a female labour force participation rate of 42% exceeds the national average yet coexists with male-dominated pond titles, collateral-based credit systems that exclude women, mobility norms that confine them to local markets, and training schedules designed without reference to domestic labour. National policy has historically coded men as producers and women as beneficiaries, reproducing unequal access to subsidies. The cooperative is proposed as the institutional lever that converts collective presence into formal economic identity: once registered, a group can sign leases, hold assets, and access state schemes. The APMUS cooperative in Nagaon district, Assam, with 630 members of whom 71% are women, demonstrates full value-chain integration and a capital base of roughly 6.3 lakh. Participation has also shifted self-perception from beneficiary to producer. The authors call for mainstreaming women-led fisheries cooperatives under NRLM and linking them to ASEAN markets through the Act East Policy, reframing the entire intervention as a rights-based rather than welfare approach.

Where can I use this?

Paper I · 3 Economic Organization

Economic organisation turns on how production and exchange are institutionally governed. The APMUS case shows cooperative formation as an institutional mechanism that converts informal labour into formal economic agency. Write it as applied anthropology supplying institutional identity where market and state structures have excluded women despite their numerical presence.

Paper I · 2.2 The Nature of Society

Social stratification questions ask how group membership governs access to resources. The shift from beneficiary coding in fisheries policy to producer-manager identity through cooperative registration is a textbook GAD correction. Write it as institutional redesign that relocates women from the welfare column to the rights column of development planning.

What's in it for your Mains Exam

From beneficiary to producer: the cooperative as institutional correction

Policy that codes men as producers and women as beneficiaries is not a neutral description; it actively reproduces unequal access to credit, title, and training. APMUS, Nagaon, breaks this cycle not by changing norms directly but by inserting an institution between women and the market: once registered, the cooperative holds assets, signs leases, and meets bank collateral requirements that individual women cannot. The Inaima Keithel in Manipur, by contrast, shows that even historically deep collective trading remains economically marginal when it stays informal and outside certification systems. The lesson is that presence without institutional identity changes nothing.

Barriers that cooperatives must overcome: a causal chain



Draw five boxes left to right with arrows; the fifth box crosses through the chain. This shows examiners you understand structural causation, not just a list of problems.

Women-led fisheries cooperatives in North East India

Revision card

Paper II · 9.2 — supplements the tribal and rural development chapter

In one breath

NER women are 42% of fisheries labour but only 10% of registered farmers — under-formalised, not under-represented. APMUS, Nagaon, shows cooperatives convert collective labour into asset-holding identity. The fix is rights framing, not welfare.

Carry this into the hall

1. 44% workforce, 10% registered: participation without formalisation changes nothing.
2. APMUS Nagaon: 630 members, 71% women, 6.3 lakh capital — full value chain, government-linked.
3. Inaima Keithel proves collective trading stays marginal without certification or state connection.
4. Cooperative solves the collateral problem: group asset-holding meets bank requirements individual women cannot.
5. Rights framing demands pond titles and committee seats; welfare framing delivers only scheme benefits.

Numbers worth quoting

44.3% vs 10%	workforce share versus registered farmer share
71% women in APMUS	share in the Nagaon cooperative

Scholars to cite

GAD (Gender and Development) framework	women as agents	exposes welfare framing in fisheries policy as the structural source of under-formalisation
Rights-based approach to development	entitlement over charity	grounds the demand that women hold pond titles and committee seats, not scheme benefits
Value-chain integration	full-chain participation	shows that producer gains require control from input purchase through joint marketing

Concepts to use

under-formalisation · institutional identity · welfare-to-rights shift · value-chain integration · collateral exclusion · beneficiary coding · cooperative as lever

Case to mention

APMUS cooperative, Nagaon district, Assam — 630 members, 71% women	evidence that cooperative registration converts informal labour into asset-holding, credit-eligible agency

Practice

- Distinguish between under-representation and under-formalisation as analytical categories in tribal development. Illustrate with reference to women in North East India's fisheries economy. (10 marks)
- Critically examine the role of cooperative institutions in translating women's labour participation into

economic agency in tribal economies. How does a rights-based framework differ from a welfare approach in this context? (20 marks)

PMUY energy justice failures for tribal NER communities

Source: Economic & Political Weekly, Vol LXI No 38, September 19, 2026 · Is India's PMUY Delivering a Just Clean Cooking Transition? (EPW Commentary, September 19, 2026)

Paper II · 6.2 — supplements the tribal problems chapter

Summary

The Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana, launched in 2016, promised LPG access to marginalised households as a route out of biomass dependence, with 10.33 crore connections reached by April 2025. Nationally, per capita LPG consumption rose from 3.01 to 4.43 cylinders across that period. These aggregate gains, however, mask a systematic exclusion of Scheduled Tribe households in the Northeast Region. NFHS-5 data show 54% of NER households still rely on biomass against a national average of 40.6%, yet the region holds only 6.8% of total PMUY connections, the second-lowest share nationally. A clear social gradient compounds geographic exclusion: only 28% of ST households receive home delivery of LPG refills, against 41% for general category households. Rural Manipur evidence shows that even registered PMUY beneficiaries continue fuel stacking with biomass, meaning a formal connection does not translate into exclusive or sustained clean cooking. An energy justice framework exposes three failures: distributive justice in unequal connection allocation, procedural justice in non-participatory scheme design, and recognition justice in the refusal to acknowledge NER communities' distinct geography, culture and institutional context. The authors conclude that connection counts are an inadequate metric; equitable clean cooking transition requires regionally adaptive, use-focused implementation.

Where can I use this?

Paper II · 9.2 Role of anthropology in tribal and rural development

Development policy and its discontents is the central concern of environmental anthropology applied to marginalised groups. The 28% home-delivery rate for ST households and the Manipur fuel-stacking evidence supply concrete proof that development benefits do not cascade automatically to forest-dependent tribal populations, feeding directly into critiques of top-down development design.

Paper II · 9.1 History of administration of tribal areas, tribal policies, plans, programmes of tribal development and...

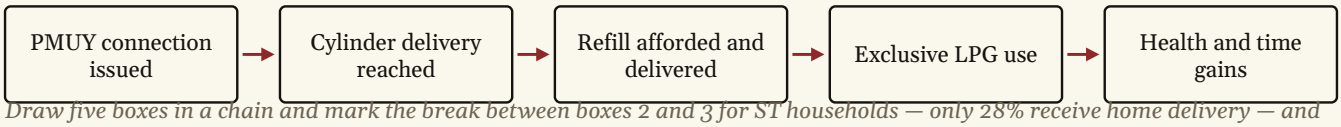
Tribal policies and the implementation of development programmes is the framework here. PMUY's one-size-fits-all design, which produced a 6.8% connection share for a region bearing 54% biomass dependence, is a textbook case of a welfare programme that fails the adequacy test for tribal NER populations.

What's in it for your Mains Exam

Three justice failures inside one welfare scheme

Justice dimension	How PMUY fails NER tribal households
Distributive	NER holds 6.8% of connections despite carrying 54% biomass dependence
Procedural	Scheme design is non-participatory; no local adaptation for geography or culture
Recognition	Distinct socio-cultural context and remoteness of NER communities ignored in policy

From connection count to sustained use: a cascade that breaks for ST households



Draw five boxes in a chain and mark the break between boxes 2 and 3 for ST households — only 28% receive home delivery — and again between 3 and 4 where Manipur fuel stacking persists. This shows the connection-use gap is structural, not incidental.

PMUY energy justice failures for tribal NER communities

Revision card

Paper II · 6.2 — supplements the tribal problems chapter

In one breath

PMUY holds 10.33 crore connections nationally but NER has only 6.8% of them while 54% of its households still burn biomass. ST households receive home delivery at the lowest rate of any social group. Formal connection does not equal sustained use.

Carry this into the hall

1. NER has 54% biomass dependence but only 6.8% of PMUY connections: exclusion is not random.
2. Only 28% of ST households get home LPG delivery against 41% for general category: a social gradient of access.
3. Manipur beneficiaries still stack biomass: formal connection does not end energy deprivation.
4. Recognition justice failure means policy ignores geography, culture and institutions of NER communities.
5. Connection counts are the wrong metric; sustained equitable use must become the policy standard.

Numbers worth quoting

54% vs 40.6%	NER vs national biomass dependence, NFHS-5
6.8%	NER share of total PMUY connections
28% vs 41%	ST vs general category home LPG delivery rate

Scholars to cite

Energy justice framework	distributive, procedural, recognition justice	names the three axes on which PMUY systematically fails ST households in the NER
Patnaik and Jha	LPG delivery gradient	document that ST households receive home refill delivery at lower rates than every other social category

Concepts to use

fuel stacking · recognition justice · procedural justice · distributive justice · energy deprivation · connection-use gap · regionally adaptive implementation

Case to mention

Rural Manipur PMUY beneficiary households	evidence that formal LPG connection does not end biomass use among tribal households

Practice

- Despite being a primary target group under PMUY, Scheduled Tribe households in Northeast India remain acutely energy-deprived. Using an energy justice framework, examine why formal welfare connections fail to produce equitable outcomes for tribal communities. (10 marks)

- Critically analyse how geographic and historical marginalisation compounds the structural problems of tribal communities in India, with reference to the outcomes of clean cooking policy in the Northeast Region. (20 marks)

Millet Decline and Revival in Tribal Andhra Pradesh and Odisha

Source: Economic & Political Weekly, Vol LXI No 38, September 19, 2026 · Contextualising Co-production in Millet Revival in India — V Swaran, Srijit Mishra

Paper II · 6.2 — supplements the problems of tribal communities chapter

Summary

Small millet cultivation, archaeologically documented for 4,500 years on the subcontinent, collapsed under Green Revolution policies that bypassed rainfed drylands entirely. Nationally, area and production of small millets fell by roughly 83% between the early 1970s and early 2010s. Andhra Pradesh recorded the steepest absolute fall, from 966,000 to 30,000 hectares. This decline imposed compounded losses on tribal and Scheduled Caste farming households: loss of a subsistence crop, reduced dietary diversity, and the invisible drudgery burden borne by women who still dehull by hand. Action-research in 2022 across three districts — Sri Satya Sai and Alluri Sitarama Raju in Andhra Pradesh and Malkangiri in Odisha — introduced a desktop dehuller and recruited 25 nano-entrepreneurs. Outcomes diverged sharply by terrain and market access: ASR communities at 600–950 m elevation with limited alternatives retained millet cultivation, while flat, semi-arid SSS farmers near Bengaluru markets had abandoned it almost entirely by the 2000s. Crucially, no respondent named post-harvest drudgery as a reason for abandonment, though literature identifies it as a key driver — revealing drudgery as culturally normalised and rendered invisible. Technology transfer alone cannot revive a crop when seeds, buyers and cultural food norms are absent.

Where can I use this?

Paper II · 9.2 Role of anthropology in tribal and rural development

Feminist political ecology frames women's agricultural labour as structurally invisible when it is culturally normalised. Manual dehulling delegated entirely to women across all three sites, yet named by no respondent as a hardship, is a textbook case of this invisibility. Write it as evidence that gender-differentiated drudgery persists beneath the surface of revival programmes.

Paper II · 9.1 History of administration of tribal areas, tribal policies, plans, programmes of tribal development and...

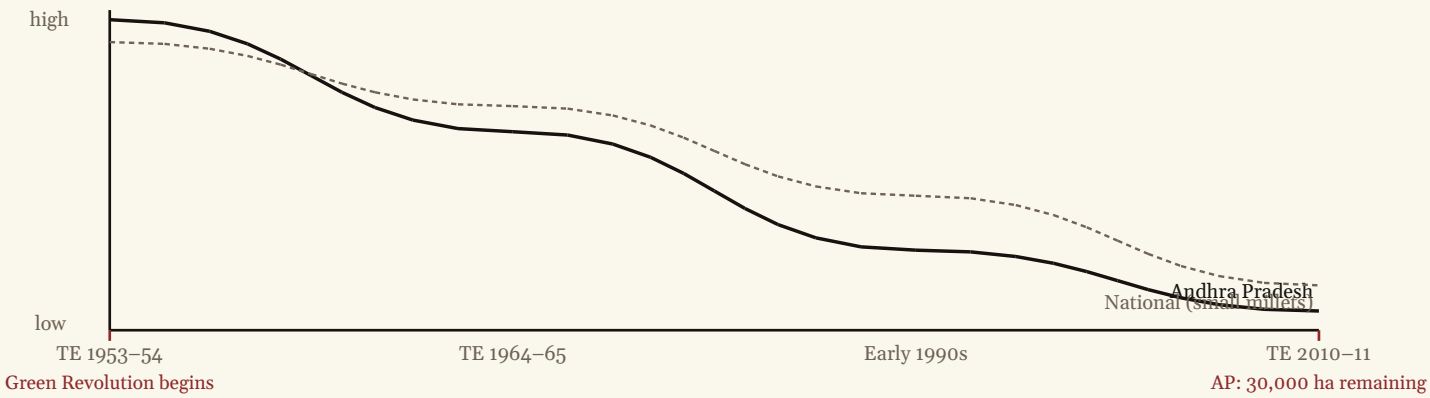
Tribal development programmes are judged on implementation, not design intent. The dehuller intervention's divergent results — effective in ASR, irrelevant in SSS where cultivation had already collapsed — illustrate the gap between technology-delivery models and participatory development. Write it as a critique of supply-side tribal agricultural programmes.

What's in it for your Mains Exam

Why drudgery silence matters more than drudgery itself

In all three districts, post-harvest drudgery — the most cited driver of millet decline in the literature — was named by zero respondents as a reason for abandonment. Manual dehulling is delegated to women and culturally absorbed as ordinary domestic labour. This silence is the finding: when a burden is gendered and normalised, it disappears from survey data and therefore from programme design. Introducing a dehuller addresses a problem communities have not articulated, while the actual barriers — no seeds, no buyers, bird damage — remain unaddressed. Tribal development interventions that bypass community problem-framing reproduce, rather than correct, structural marginalisation.

Millet area collapse: Andhra Pradesh against national trend



Draw two falling curves to show AP's steeper collapse against the national trend; anchors the 83% national figure and the 966,000 to 30,000 ha AP figure in one image.

Millet Decline and Revival in Tribal Andhra Pradesh and Odisha

Revision card

Paper II · 6.2 — supplements the problems of tribal communities chapter

In one breath

Green Revolution policies cut small millet area by 83% nationally, displacing tribal subsistence farmers. Women's dehulling drudgery went unnamed as a cause of decline, showing cultural normalisation of labour burden. Terrain and market access, not technology alone, determine whether revival succeeds.

Carry this into the hall

1. Small millet area fell 83% nationally; AP from 966,000 to 30,000 ha — the sharpest absolute collapse.
2. Zero respondents named drudgery as a driver, though literature does — gendered labour rendered invisible by normalisation.
3. SSS abandoned millets for groundnut near Bengaluru markets; ASR retained them because terrain blocks alternatives.
4. Co-production framework: revival needs seeds, buyers, cultural norms — not only a dehuller.
5. Swaminathan's own call for an evergreen revolution concedes the Green Revolution's nutritional and ecological failures.

Numbers worth quoting

83%	national small millet area-production fall, early 1970s to 2010s
966,000 to 30,000 ha	Andhra Pradesh millet area collapse

Scholars to cite

MS Swaminathan	evergreen revolution	Even the Green Revolution's architect conceded it needed ecological and nutritional correction — undermining its completeness.
Science, Technology and Society (STS) — co-production framework	co-production	Agricultural systems and techno-scientific choices mutually constitute each other; millet revival requires more than a dehuller.
Kataki (2002)	dietary diversity decline	Reduced crop diversity after the Green Revolution raised mild-to-moderate malnutrition between 1970 and 1990.

Concepts to use

drudgery normalisation · co-production · rainfed marginalisation · nano-entrepreneurship · nutri-cereal policy · terrain-mediated abandonment · invisible labour burden

Case to mention

SSS and ASR districts, Andhra Evidence that terrain and market access, not technology, determine millet Pradesh; Malkangiri, Odisha — revival outcomes. 2022 dehuller trial

Practice

- Green Revolution policies bypassed tribal rainfed agriculture and deepened structural poverty. Illustrate with reference to millet-dependent communities in peninsular India. (10 marks)
- Tribal development programmes often fail because they deliver technology without addressing cultural and ecological context. Examine critically with examples from agricultural revival initiatives. (20 marks)

Denisovan occupation of Bianfu Cave, Yunnan: 134–190 kya

Source: New Scientist, Vol 271 No 3613, 19 September 2026 · Denisovan tools show how the mysterious humans lived
Paper I · 1.4 — supplements the human evolution chapter

Summary

Excavations at Bianfu Cave, Yunnan, begun in 2019, have produced the first direct archaeological evidence of Denisovans in southwest China. Ten of eighteen sediment layers yielded artefacts; four hominin teeth were recovered intact. Because the warm climate precluded DNA extraction, identification rested on palaeoproteomics: protein variants recovered from two skull fragments, one radius, and two teeth matched Denisovan-specific signatures and excluded Homo sapiens and Neanderthals. The remains represent at least four individuals, dated to 134,000–167,000 years ago, while artefact-bearing layers span 70,000–190,000 years ago — roughly 120,000 years of single-species occupation. The 1,366 stone artefacts are simple: flakes, cores, and scrapers markedly less elaborate than contemporaneous Neanderthal assemblages. Seven bone tools were also found, and the team argues Denisovans depended more heavily on bone than stone. Faunal remains — dominated by deer and bovids, with rhinoceros and hyena — carry butchery marks indicating active hunting. Pollen evidence shows a conifer-forest-and-steppe environment, temperate and ecologically richer than the cold, high-altitude Tibetan and Siberian locales where Denisovans were previously known, indicating broad ecological adaptability.

Where can I use this?

Paper I · 1.8 (a) Principles of Prehistoric Archaeology. Chronology

Prehistoric archaeology chronology requires understanding how dates are assigned to hominin sites. At Bianfu, OSL and radiometric dating of artefact-bearing layers establish a 120,000-year occupation span, while palaeoproteomics replaces DNA where climate destroys genetic material. Write it as a case where multi-method chronology resolves what stratigraphy alone cannot.

Paper I · 9.1 Human Genetics

Genetic recovery is the method that built the known Denisovan range. Bianfu Cave extends the range into temperate southwest China, adding ecological adaptability as a Denisovan characteristic. Write it as evidence that distributional maps based only on genetic recovery underestimate hominin range.

What's in it for your Mains Exam

Lithic simplicity versus Neanderthal complexity: what Bianfu reveals

Feature	Bianfu Denisovans
Stone artefacts	1,366: flakes, cores, simple scrapers
Bone tools	7 recovered; bone use prioritised over stone
Neanderthal comparison	Markedly more elaborate contemporaneous assemblages
Faunal strategy	Active hunting, butchery marks on deer and bovid bone
Environment (pollen)	Conifer forest and steppe — temperate, ecologically rich

Denisovan occupation of Bianfu Cave, Yunnan: 134–190 kya

Revision card

Paper I · 1.4 — supplements the human evolution chapter

In one breath

Palaeoproteomics identified Denisovans at Bianfu Cave, Yunnan, 134–190 kya — the first southwest China evidence. Simple lithics and bone tools contrast with Neanderthal assemblages. Temperate pollen record extends their known ecological range.

Carry this into the hall

1. Palaeoproteomics, not DNA, identified Denisovans — warm climate degrades genetics but not all proteins.
2. 134–190 kya occupation span: one species at one site for roughly 120,000 years.
3. Simple lithics plus bone tools challenge the assumption that Denisovans matched Neanderthal technological complexity.
4. Temperate conifer-steppe environment at Bianfu extends Denisovan range beyond cold, high-altitude sites.
5. Active hunting of large prey indicated by butchery marks — not scavengers.

Numbers worth quoting

134,000–190,000 BP	full span of Bianfu occupation

Scholars to cite

Palaeoproteomics (named framework)	protein-based identification	Recovers hominin identity where warm climates degrade ancient DNA, extending the identification frontier.
Bence Viola, University of Toronto	ecological adaptability	Argues Bianfu represents a different ecosystem, implying Denisovans were not cold-climate specialists.

Concepts to use

palaeoproteomics · single-species occupation · bone tool reliance · temperate refugium · lithic simplicity · multi-method chronology · ecological adaptability

Case to mention

kya	Cave, Yunnan, 134–190 Evidence that Denisovans occupied temperate southwest China and used bone-heavy toolkits.

Practice

- What does the Bianfu Cave evidence contribute to our understanding of the geographical distribution and material culture of Denisovans? (10 marks)
- Discuss the role of palaeoproteomics in establishing the phylogenetic identity of archaic hominins. Illustrate with reference to recent discoveries in East Asia. (20 marks)

Revising the human-chimpanzee divergence date

Source: New Scientist, 19 September 2026 · Ever-more distant cousins, New Scientist, 19 September 2026
Paper I · 1.4 — supplements the human evolution chapter

Summary

A systematic review by João d'Oliveira Coelho, assembled from 202 published divergence estimates spanning the late 1960s to the 2020s via the TimeTree database, reveals that the date of the human-chimpanzee last common ancestor remains stubbornly unresolved. Estimates before 1980 ranged from 4 to 14 million years ago; estimates from 2015 onwards range from 4 to 12 million years ago — barely narrower despite five decades of molecular and fossil work. The more pointed finding is a logical contradiction embedded in widely used textbooks: many place the human-chimp split as recently as 4 million years ago while simultaneously acknowledging hominins such as Sahelanthropus tchadensis, Orrorin and Ardipithecus, all of which predate that figure, with Sahelanthropus reaching approximately 7 million years. D'Oliveira Coelho calls this a failure of synthesis in palaeoanthropology pedagogy. On the behavioural side, chimpanzee populations display culturally transmitted, context-sensitive tool use — ant-foraging strategies adjusted to species aggression in Senegal, crab-fishing in Guinea's Nimba mountains, and oyster-dislodging documented as early as 1678 — collectively challenging the premise that complex learned behaviour marks a distinctively human threshold.

Where can I use this?

Paper I · 1.5 Characteristics of Primates

The primate characteristics framework foregrounds behavioural and cognitive continuities between humans and apes. Chimp populations in Senegal and Guinea's Nimba mountains show context-sensitive, observationally learned tool use — adjusting foraging strategy to ant aggression, fishing for crabs — which places cultural transmission within the non-human primate repertoire and challenges a clean human-ape behavioural boundary.

Paper I · 9.1 Human Genetics

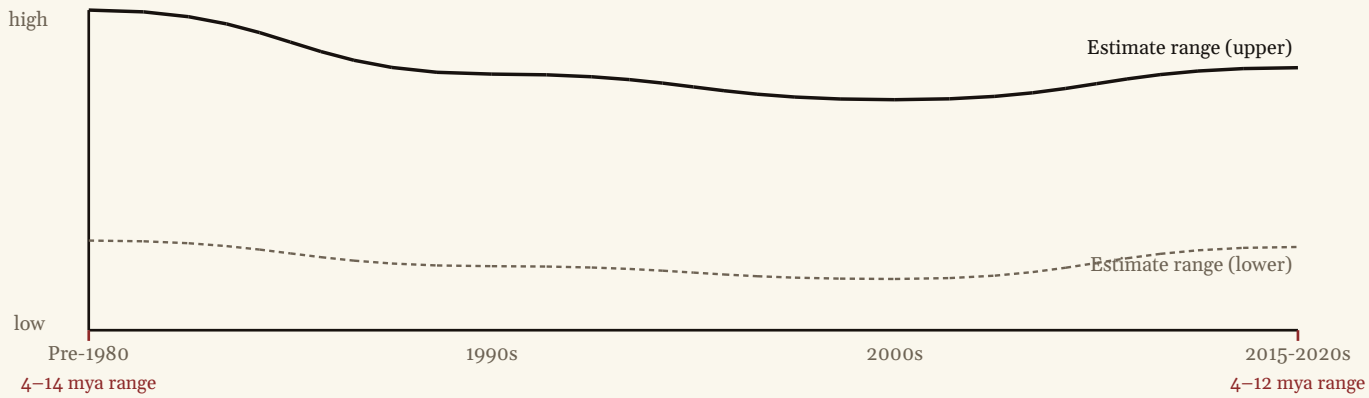
Molecular dating is what supplies a divergence estimate in the first place. The unresolved 4-to-12-million-year range, and the logical impossibility of a 4 mya split alongside a 7 mya Sahelanthropus, directly informs how candidates describe the phylogenetic relationship and geographical spread of the great-ape clade.

What's in it for your Mains Exam

The internal contradiction in palaeoanthropology textbooks

Many textbooks place the human-chimp divergence at approximately 4 million years ago — yet the same volumes accept Sahelanthropus tchadensis at roughly 7 million years, Orrorin and Ardipithecus at earlier points still. These positions are logically incompatible: a last common ancestor cannot postdate fossils already placed on the hominin line. D'Oliveira Coelho's review of 202 estimates exposes this as a field-wide failure of synthesis, not an isolated editorial lapse. Candidates should write that the uncertainty range — 4 to 12 million years in recent literature — is itself the finding, and that accepting early hominin fossils forces any credible divergence date back well beyond 7 million years.

Divergence estimates across five decades



Draw two bounding curves showing the upper and lower estimate limits across decades; the narrow compression from 10 to 8 million years of uncertainty proves the molecular-fossil synthesis has stalled.

Revising the human-chimpanzee divergence date

Revision card

Paper I · 1.4 — supplements the human evolution chapter

In one breath

202 divergence estimates show the human-chimp split remains unresolved between roughly 4 and 12 million years ago. Textbooks contradict themselves by accepting both a 4 mya split and earlier hominins. Chimp cultural tool use further erodes human behavioural uniqueness.

Carry this into the hall

1. 202 estimates over 50 years yield a range of 4–12 mya — uncertainty barely narrowed.
2. A 4 mya split is logically impossible once Sahelanthropus at ~7 mya is accepted.
3. Molecular clocks and fossil dates remain in unresolved tension, not complementary agreement.
4. Chimp cultural tool use — crab-fishing, adjusted ant-foraging — erodes behavioural human uniqueness.
5. D'Oliveira Coelho names the contradiction a pedagogy failure, not merely a data gap.

Numbers worth quoting

202 estimates, 4–12 mya	full range of published divergence dates

Scholars to cite

João d'Oliveira Coelho	synthesis failure	Textbooks contradict themselves by accepting early hominins and a 4 mya divergence simultaneously.
Nora Slania, Max Planck Institute of Animal Behavior	observational learning	Young chimps acquire complex tool skills by peering at adults, evidencing cultural transmission.
Andreu Sánchez-Megías, University of Barcelona	context-sensitive tool use	Senegal chimps vary ant-foraging tools by species aggression, demonstrating flexible behavioural decision-making.

Concepts to use

last common ancestor · molecular clock estimate · divergence date uncertainty · synthesis failure · cultural transmission · hominin-Pan boundary · behavioural flexibility

Case to mention

Chimpanzees, Nimba Evidence of culturally transmitted, context-sensitive tool use predating mountains Guinea and Senegal assumed human threshold. populations

Practice

- What does the conflict between molecular clock estimates and fossil evidence reveal about the human-chimpanzee divergence date? Discuss. (10 marks)

- Critically examine the fossil and behavioural evidence used to establish the phylogenetic relationship between Homo sapiens and Pan troglodytes. (20 marks)

Cheriyal Dolls: Commodification of Golla Oral Epic

Source: Anthro Bulletin, Volume 7, Issue 8, August 2026 (Anthropos India Foundation, New Delhi) · When Craft Becomes Commodity: The Changing Life of Katamaraju Katha through Cheriyal Dolls

Paper II · 1.3 — supplements the ethno-archaeology in India chapter

Summary

The Katamaraju Katha is a Telugu oral epic of the Golla (Yadava) pastoral sub-caste, narrating a 13th-century herdsman-chieftain's drought-driven cattle migration and armed resistance against Chola authority over grazing rights. His genealogy runs to Krishna through the lunar lineage, making the story simultaneously a pastoral assertion and a sacred genealogy. Cheriyal dolls are the material vehicle for this epic: unlike sequential scroll paintings, three-dimensional dolls display all 53 named characters simultaneously, communicating kinship, hierarchy, and solidarity through spatial arrangement rather than narrative order — what the authors term 'spatial historiography'. Each figure is hand-formed from sawdust and tamarind-seed paste, painted in a fixed palette, and may take nearly six months to complete. Transmission is family-based and apprenticeship-driven, leaving only a handful of practitioners. Market demand is redirecting production toward decorative miniatures that circulate without the storyteller's voice, gesture, or audience — stripping the object of its performative activation. Museum preservation at DakshinaChitra in Chennai stabilises the craft materially but decontextualises it. GI registration creates authorised makers who sustain production without full narrative competence. What is at stake is not an aesthetic form but a community's living system for transmitting pastoral histories and memories of resistance.

Where can I use this?

Paper II · 3.3 Sacred Complex and Nature-Man-Spirit Complex

Vidyarthi's Sacred Complex requires a sacred centre, specialists, and a congregation. Katamaraju's Krishna-lineage genealogy makes the doll performance a sacred specialist's act, not mere entertainment. Write it as a pastoral, non-Brahminical sacred complex whose specialist is the hereditary storyteller and whose sacred genealogy is activated through material objects rather than a pilgrimage centre.

Paper I · 7 Culture, Language and Communication

Debates on oral tradition and folk culture rest on the distinction between text and performance. Cheriyal dolls show that a non-literate community encodes history spatially in objects, not only in voice. Write it as evidence that performative context — gesture, audience, recitation — is constitutive of meaning, and its removal by commodification is a form of cultural loss distinct from physical disappearance.

What's in it for your Mains Exam

Commodification as Performative Loss, Not Merely Aesthetic Decline

The shift toward decorative miniatures is not a stylistic change but a structural severing: the doll without the storyteller's voice, gesture, and assembled audience is an inert object. Spatial historiography depends on the practitioner rearranging figures in real time to show kinship and solidarity — relations invisible to a buyer who places a miniature on a shelf. GI registration counters economic precarity but produces authorised makers whose competence is technical, not narrative. The community loses its mode of remembering resistance, not only a craft.

From Performative System to Museum Object: A Process Flow



Draw this five-stage chain to show that commodification and institutional preservation are sequential stages of the same decontextualising process, not alternatives to it.

Cheriyal Dolls: Commodification of Golla Oral Epic

Revision card

Paper II · 1.3 — supplements the ethno-archaeology in India chapter

In one breath

Golla dolls perform Katamaraju Katha through spatial arrangement of 53 characters, not linear narration. Market miniaturisation and museum preservation both sever the storyteller's voice from the object. Transmission is apprenticeship-based with very few practitioners surviving.

Carry this into the hall

1. 53-character doll set encodes an entire social world; removal of any element collapses the genealogy.
2. Spatial arrangement, not sequence, is the epistemic form — miniaturisation destroys the grammar.
3. Six-month production cycle plus apprenticeship-only transmission makes the tradition acutely fragile.
4. GI and museums sustain the object while dissolving the event; preservation is partial by design.
5. Loss is to community memory of pastoral resistance, not to aesthetics alone — that is the anthropological claim.

Scholars to cite

Bose (2016, 2021)	GI authorised users	GI frameworks sustain craft production but create makers without full narrative competence, deepening decontextualisation.
spatial historiography (coined in source)	spatial historiography	Three-dimensional simultaneous display encodes kinship and hierarchy that sequential narration cannot carry.
performance theory (broadly Bauman)	performative activation	An object carries meaning only within the event of performance; commodification dissolves that event.

Concepts to use

spatial historiography · performative activation · decontextualisation · GI authorised users · apprenticeship transmission · pastoral oral epic · ritual embeddedness

Case to mention

DakshinaChitra Heritage Museum, Chennai — Cheriyal doll display	Evidence that institutional preservation stabilises craft while severing its performative context.

Practice

- Commodification of folk traditions does not merely change their form but destroys their social function. Discuss with reference to material culture and oral tradition in Indian pastoral communities. (10 marks)
- Examine how market integration and institutional heritage preservation together accelerate the decontextualisation of indigenous knowledge systems. Illustrate from any one Indian folk tradition. (20 marks)

Magadhi Lokgeet on Dashrath Manjhi as Living Archive

Source: Anthro Bulletin, Volume 7, Issue 8, August 2026 (Anthropos India Foundation, New Delhi) · Love, Memory and Digital Transmission: An Anthropological Study of Magadhi Lokgeet on Dashrath Manjhi and Falguni Devi from Gehlaur, Bihar

Paper I · 7 — supplements the culture, language and communication chapter

Summary

Ethnographic fieldwork in Gehlaur village, Gaya district, Bihar documented eight Magadhi lokgeet and one biographical poem centred on Dashrath Manjhi, who carved a path through the Gehlaur hills over twenty-two years using only a chisel and hammer, cutting the road distance from 55 km to 15 km. The songs frame his labour not as civic heroism but as an act of love for his wife Falguni Devi, who died before the path was complete. Hammer and chisel appear as symbols of devotion; grief songs for Falguni Devi preserve emotional registers that official commemorations omit. Traditional performance contexts were village gatherings, agricultural work, festivals, and evening meetings. Today younger villagers encounter these songs primarily through digital platforms: folk singers such as Sunny Gehlori perform Magadhi lokgeet on YouTube, extending the reach of a village oral tradition beyond Gehlaur's geographical limits. The authors argue this is a change in transmission mode rather than cultural loss — the courtyard is supplemented, not replaced, by the mobile phone. Official state death-anniversary ceremonies in Gehlaur now coexist with this grassroots oral tradition, producing layered registers of memory. Folklore therefore emerges as a dynamic, adaptive form rather than a static residue of the past.

Where can I use this?

Paper II · 3.3 Sacred Complex and Nature-Man-Spirit Complex

The sacred complex framework examines how specialist performers, pilgrimage or commemorative sites, and textual traditions cluster around a focal figure. In Gehlaur, Manjhi's death-anniversary ceremony, the folk singer as oral specialist, and the lokgeet as community text form precisely such a cluster. Write it as a non-Brahminical, non-pilgrimage sacred complex organised around a heroic rather than divine focal point.

Paper II · 5.3 Indigenous and exogenous processes of socio-cultural change in Indian society

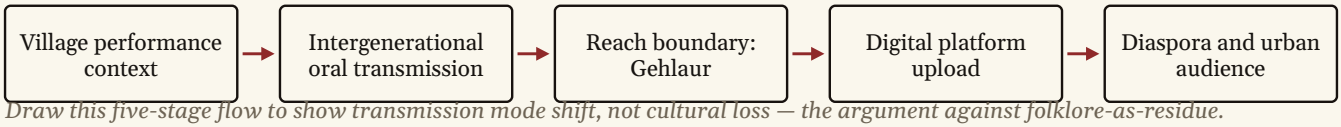
Media and social change is the framework here. The Magadhi lokgeet communicate grief, conjugal devotion, and community pride through performance rather than canvas or craft. The shift to YouTube transmission shows expressive culture adapting medium without abandoning message, which is precisely the argument about art as living social communication.

What's in it for your Mains Exam

Hammer and Chisel as Symbol: How Lokgeet Encode What History Omits

Official state commemoration frames Dashrath Manjhi as a civic achiever. The Magadhi lokgeet recast the same biography as a conjugal devotion narrative: the hammer and chisel are symbols of love, not labour policy. Grief songs for Falguni Devi preserve affective registers — loss, loneliness, continued relationship across death — that bureaucratic memory cannot hold. This is Bauman's performance-centred folklore in action: meaning is constituted in the act of singing, not in the monument or the official ceremony. Two registers of memory coexist in the same village; the oral register carries what the state register cannot.

Courtyard to Platform: Transmission Shift as Cultural Adaptation



Draw this five-stage flow to show transmission mode shift, not cultural loss — the argument against folklore-as-residue.

Magadhi Lokgeet on Dashrath Manjhi as Living Archive

Revision card

Paper I · 7 — supplements the culture, language and communication chapter

In one breath

Magadhi songs on Dashrath Manjhi encode devotion, not civic heroism, with hammer and chisel as symbols. Digital platforms extend village oral tradition without replacing it. Official commemoration and grassroots song create layered memory registers.

Carry this into the hall

1. Hammer and chisel in song = devotion symbols, not tools: oral tradition encodes what official history omits.
2. 55 km to 15 km road: twenty-two years of labour recast by lokgeet as a love story, not civic feat.
3. Courtyard supplemented by YouTube: transmission mode changes, oral community does not dissolve.
4. Layered memory registers: state death-anniversary ceremony and grassroots song coexist in Gehlaur simultaneously.
5. Folklore is dynamic adaptation, not static residue: the living archive thesis challenges preservation-as-freezing.

Numbers worth quoting

55 km -> 15 km	road distance cut; stakes the songs commemorate
22 years ('bais baris')	duration encoded in song lyrics directly

Scholars to cite

Walter Ong	secondary orality	Digital platforms regenerate oral performance for dispersed audiences, fulfilling secondary orality's collective resonance through new media.
UNESCO intangible cultural heritage framework	living heritage	Lokgeet survives as living heritage precisely because transmission mode adapts; digital archiving does not freeze but extends the tradition.
Richard Bauman	performance-centred folklore	Folklore's meaning is constituted in performance context; digital performance shifts context without dissolving the communicative act.

Concepts to use

transmission mode shift · layered memory registers · secondary orality · intangible cultural heritage · symbolic instrumentalisation · courtyard-to-platform continuum · oral archive

Case to mention

Gehlaur village lokgeet, Gaya, Bihar	Evidence that digital media extends oral tradition without replacing performance community.

Practice

- Oral tradition is not a residue of the past but a dynamic adaptive form. Discuss with reference to the role of digital media in the transmission of folk culture. (10 marks)
- Examine how expressive culture preserves registers of community memory that official commemoration cannot. Illustrate with ethnographic evidence from Indian folk traditions. (20 marks)

Climate Change: Ingold, Strathern, Bourdieu, Bonda Reversion

Source: Anthro Bulletin, Volume 7, Issue 8, August 2026 (Anthropos India Foundation, New Delhi) · Anthropology in a Warming World: Climate Change, Relationality and the Human Future

Paper I · 9.7 — supplements the ecological anthropology chapter

Summary

Kamal K. Misra argues that climate change is not a background condition but a disruption of the relational fabric through which communities exist. Three theoretical frameworks organise the argument. Tim Ingold's dwelling perspective holds that humans are constituted through active engagement with their environment, so when rivers shift course or seasons become erratic, lived worlds are remade from within. Marilyn Strathern's relationality insists that persons are effects of relationships rather than bounded individuals, meaning climate impacts cascade across households, generations, and species networks simultaneously. Pierre Bourdieu's habitus concept captures the embodied ecological dispositions accumulated through generational practice; climate disruption forces communities to renegotiate knowledge that was previously unreflective. Crucially, the article grounds these frameworks in a field case: Bonda women in Odisha's Malkangiri district practise Dangar shifting cultivation. Promotion of modern agriculture pushed hybrid paddy adoption, but hybrid varieties proved climatically fragile under flash floods and erratic rainfall, while traditional millet remained resilient and nutritionally reliable, prompting reversion. The article then advances a political ecology argument — climate vulnerability is historically produced through colonialism, resource dispossession, and unequal development; those least responsible for emissions bear the greatest exposure. Methodologically, multi-sited ethnography in dialogue with climatology is advocated, while cautioning against romanticising indigenous knowledge as timeless or static.

Where can I use this?

Paper II · 6.3 Developmental projects and their impact on tribal displacement and problems of rehabilitation

Developmental projects and forest policy are what produce differential exposure. The article's argument that colonial dispossession and unequal development produce differential climate exposure supplies exactly that framework. Write it as: indigenous communities bear disproportionate climate costs because historically structured land and forest dispossession has removed their ecological buffers.

Paper II · 6.2 Problems of the tribal Communities—Land alienation, poverty, indebtedness, low literacy, poor educational...

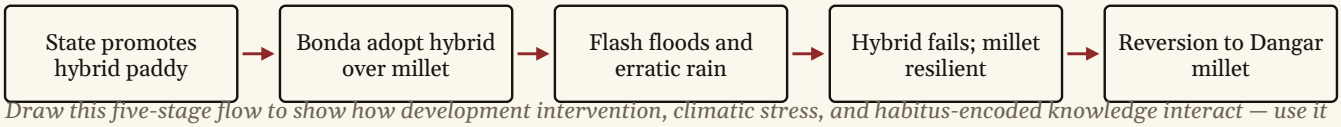
literacy, poor educational... Tribal development debates turn on whether outside intervention displaces locally held knowledge. The Bonda hybrid-paddy failure — reversed by a return to Dangar millet — illustrates how development promotion can deepen vulnerability when it overrides habitus-encoded agronomic knowledge. Write it as evidence that ecologically grounded traditional practice can outperform introduced technology under changing climatic conditions.

What's in it for your Mains Exam

Three frameworks, one crisis: what each adds

Framework	What it reveals about climate change
Ingold — dwelling	Disruption is interior to lived worlds, not a threat arriving from outside
Strathern — relationality	Impacts cascade across households, species, and generations as connected effects
Bourdieu — habitus	Generationally encoded ecological practice is destabilised, demanding active renegotiation

From abstract theory to field evidence: the Bonda case as process



Draw this five-stage flow to show how development intervention, climatic stress, and habitus-encoded knowledge interact — use it to argue that reversion is not conservatism but rational ecological recalibration.

Climate Change: Ingold, Strathern, Bourdieu, Bonda Reversion

Revision card

Paper I · 9.7 — supplements the ecological anthropology chapter

In one breath

Ingold, Strathern, and Bourdieu reframe climate change as a crisis of relationships, not background conditions. Bonda women in Malkangiri reverted to millet after hybrid paddy failed climatically. Vulnerability is historically produced through dispossession, not just atmospheric change.

Carry this into the hall

1. Dwelling, relationality, habitus: three frameworks that make climate change anthropologically tractable.
2. Bonda millet reversion proves traditional habitus can outperform state-promoted hybrids under climatic stress.
3. Vulnerability is historically produced through dispossession — not simply a function of geography or exposure.
4. Those least responsible for emissions bear the greatest climate costs: the political ecology core argument.
5. Multi-sited ethnography plus disciplinary collaboration, but grounded fieldwork remains irreplaceable.

Scholars to cite

Tim Ingold — dwelling perspective	dwelling, taskscape	Climate change disrupts dwelling itself; the lived world is remade, not merely its setting.
Marilyn Strathern — relational personhood	relationality	Climate impacts travel through relationships across households, species, and generations simultaneously.
Pierre Bourdieu — practice theory	habitus	Climate disruption forces renegotiation of embodied ecological dispositions accumulated through generational practice.

Concepts to use

dwelling disruption · relational personhood · habitus renegotiation · historically produced vulnerability · Dangar shifting cultivation · multi-sited ethnography · differential exposure

Case to mention

Bonda women, Malkangiri, Odisha — Dangar millet reversion	Evidence that traditional agronomic habitus outperforms introduced hybrids under climatic stress.

Practice

- How do the concepts of dwelling and habitus help anthropologists analyse the lived impacts of climate change on indigenous communities? Illustrate with a field example. (10 marks)
- Climate vulnerability is historically produced rather than naturally given. Discuss with reference to theoretical frameworks in ecological anthropology and evidence from tribal agrarian communities in India. (20 marks)

Tharu Commensality as Participant Observation Entry-Point

Source: Anthro Bulletin, August 2026 (Anthropos India Foundation) · Culture in sharing food—A fieldwork reflection, by Yashmine Tabasoom

Paper I · 8 — supplements the fieldwork tradition and research methods chapter

Summary

Yashmine Tabasoom's fieldwork reflection among the Tharu of Dudhwa National Park, Lakhimpur Kheri, demonstrates how commensality — shared eating — functions as the primary mechanism of rapport-building rather than a by-product of it. The Tharu combine cultivation, livestock-rearing, forest-product collection and freshwater fishing; this subsistence complexity meant the researcher accompanied community members to fields, forests and ponds each morning before returning to shared meals served on a mat or rope cot. Her deliberate refusal to decline food was a methodological choice: eating together constituted a culturally charged site of meaning where her status shifted from data-collector outsider to accepted participant. Material objects — the mat, the cot, grain storage bins — were not neutral furniture but actively structured the social space within which trust accumulated, following Miller and Woodward. Reflexivity enters when Tabasoom, photographing meals for documentation, recognises she simultaneously occupies two subject-positions: appreciative guest and analytical observer. Drawing on Davies, she argues the researcher's presence inevitably reshapes what is observed, so accounting for that dual position is methodologically necessary. The broader theoretical claim is that culture reveals itself most faithfully in the quotidian — a shared meal, a mat, a gesture of hospitality — and that fieldwork is experiential co-participation, not data extraction.

Where can I use this?

Paper II · 6.1 Tribal situation in India—Bio-genetic variability, linguistic and socioeconomic characteristics of the...

Tribal situation in India asks for socio-economic characteristics of the population. The Tharu of Dudhwa combine cultivation, livestock, forest-product collection and freshwater fishing — a multi-strand subsistence base. Write it as evidence that Adivasi livelihoods resist single-sector classification and that ethnographic access requires sharing rather than surveying that base.

Paper I · 2.1 The Nature of Culture

The nature of culture asks how values are carried and transmitted. Tharu commensality encodes generosity, reciprocity and respect for elders as structural values. Write it as evidence that everyday food practices are as analytically revealing as ritual or festival for understanding normative order.

What's in it for your Mains Exam

Commensality as Methodological Strategy, Not Social Courtesy

Standard accounts treat rapport as a precondition for participant observation. The Tharu case inverts this: eating together was the participant observation. Tabasoom's refusal to decline food was a deliberate choice because the meal — its location on mat or cot, its ingredients tracing agricultural self-sufficiency, its timing across morning, afternoon and evening — was the data. Material objects structured the social space of trust; grain bins and kitchen artefacts encoded roles. Culture was not accessed after rapport but through the acts that built it. Reflexivity: From Principle to Dual Subject-Position

Tharu Commensality as Participant Observation Entry-Point

Revision card

Paper I · 8 — supplements the fieldwork tradition and research methods chapter

In one breath

Tabasoom's Tharu fieldwork shows commensality as methodological entry-point, not mere hospitality. Deliberately sharing every meal shifted her from outsider to participant. Material objects and dual subject-positions anchor the reflexivity argument.

Carry this into the hall

1. Tharu, Dudhwa National Park: commensality is the entry-point, not a reward for entry.
2. Refusing no meal was a deliberate method choice, not politeness — the shared act was data.
3. Mat and rope cot are material-culture objects that structure trust, not neutral furniture.
4. Dual subject-position — guest and analyst — is where reflexivity becomes methodologically necessary.
5. Culture reveals itself in the quotidian; fieldwork is co-participation, not extraction.

Scholars to cite

Mintz and Du Bois (2002)	anthropology of food	food practices are a window into social structure, not merely nutrition
Dunbar (2017)	commensality and solidarity	communal eating is a mechanism for building group bonds, validating rapport as method

Concepts to use

commensality as method · dual subject-position · experiential co-participation · material culture of trust · quotidian ethnography · reflexive positionality · rapport saturation

Case to mention

Tharu community, Dudhwa National Park, Lakhimpur Kheri	evidence that shared meals produce participant status where formal interviews cannot

Practice

- Participant observation requires the researcher to be both insider and outsider simultaneously. Using a named ethnographic case, examine how this dual position is managed in the field. (10 marks)
- Reflexivity has been described as the most significant methodological innovation in twentieth-century anthropology. Critically assess this claim with reference to fieldwork traditions and at least one contemporary field account. (20 marks)

Paediatric and Adolescent HIV Burden 2025

Source: Down To Earth, 1–30 September 2026 (fortnightly, Vol. roughly Sep 2026 issue) · The pandemic persists (Digest section)

Paper I · 9.8 — supplements the epidemiological anthropology chapter

Summary

UNICEF data for 2025 show approximately 660 children contracting HIV every day, with around 200 dying daily from AIDS-related causes. Roughly 98,000 children under 15 acquired HIV during the year, bringing the cumulative infected total in that age group to about 2.6 million, with sub-Saharan Africa bearing the heaviest burden. New infections in children under 15 have fallen by about 69 per cent since 2010, driven by expanded mother-to-child transmission prevention programmes, and AIDS-related deaths in this age group are down roughly 8 per cent from their 2001 peak. Progress among adolescents has stalled sharply: around 74,000 people under 20 died from AIDS-related causes in 2025, approximately 70 per cent of them children under 10. Deaths among adolescents aged 15 to 19 have declined by only about 46 per cent since 2007. The UNICEF report attributes this stall not to biology but to political economy: abrupt external funding cuts caused medicine shortages, health-worker layoffs, and deteriorating paediatric care infrastructure, directly reversing earlier gains. The case demonstrates that epidemic trajectories are shaped by funding architecture and equity failures as much as by pathogen biology or clinical intervention.

Where can I use this?

Paper I · 11.3 Biological and socio-ecological factors influencing fecundity, fertility, natality and mortality.

Socio-ecological factors influencing mortality are the frame here. The funding-cut mechanism described here — where withdrawal of external support collapses a functioning prevention system — illustrates how development failure produces health crisis. Write it as evidence that applied health intervention is only as durable as its political-economic infrastructure.

Paper I · 10 Concept of human growth and Development

Human growth and development runs pre-natal to adolescence, and the stages matter. The PMTCT success against the adolescent-care failure offers a textbook contrast between a well-funded vertical programme and an under-resourced horizontal system. Write it as evidence that vertical disease programmes can advance one equity metric while leaving adjacent populations behind.

What's in it for your Mains Exam

Two epidemics within one: divergent trajectories by age group

Indicator	Figure and context
Daily new child infections (under	660 — persists despite PMTCT expansion
Daily AIDS deaths, children	200 — access failure, not treatment failure
Decline in under-15 new infections	since 2010 69% — PMTCT programme success
Decline in adolescent (15–19)	since 2007 46% — stalled, slowest age group
Under-20 AIDS deaths in 2025	74,000 — 70% aged under 10

Political economy as epidemic driver: the funding-shock mechanism



Draw this five-box chain to argue that epidemic reversal is a political-economy event, not a biological one — directly answering any question on structural determinants of disease.

Paediatric and Adolescent HIV Burden 2025

Revision card

Paper I · 9.8 — supplements the epidemiological anthropology chapter

In one breath

UNICEF 2025 data: 660 children infected and 200 dying daily; under-15 new infections down 69 per cent since 2010 via PMTCT programmes. Adolescent deaths declined only 46 per cent since 2007. Abrupt funding cuts reversed gains, exposing political-economy drivers of epidemic persistence.

Carry this into the hall

1. 660 children infected daily; 200 dying — access failure, not pathogen novelty.
2. 69 per cent drop in under-15 infections since 2010 proves PMTCT works when funded.
3. Only 46 per cent drop in adolescent deaths since 2007 — the equity stall needing explanation.
4. Abrupt funding cuts caused medicine shortages and layoffs, reversing epidemiological gains.
5. Sub-Saharan Africa case: epidemic geography is shaped by political economy, not biology alone.

Numbers worth quoting

660/day	children newly acquiring HIV, 2025
69%	fall in under-15 new infections since 2010

Scholars to cite

Paul Farmer / structural violence framework	structural violence	Funding withdrawal that kills children is structural violence — not neglect but a political choice with lethal, measurable outcomes.
Merrill Singer / critical medical anthropology	political economy of health	AIDS persistence in children reflects resource deprivation produced by global economic arrangements, not local cultural failure.

Concepts to use

paediatric disease burden · PMTCT vertical programme · funding-shock reversal · adolescent health equity gap · structural determinants · epidemic stall

Case to mention

Sub-Saharan African HIV cohort, UNICEF 2025	Evidence that political-economy shocks reverse epidemiological gains faster than biology creates them.

Practice

- Using recent epidemiological data, examine how structural factors rather than biological ones determine the persistence of HIV/AIDS among children and adolescents. (10 marks)
- Critically analyse the contribution of epidemiological anthropology to understanding why disease burden is unequally distributed across age groups and regions, with reference to the global paediatric HIV situation. (20 marks)

Betel nut use: Pleistocene Sulawesi cave evidence

Source: New Scientist, 19 September 2026 · Earliest evidence of habitual drug use
Paper I · 1.8 — supplements the prehistoric archaeology and chronology chapter

Summary

Excavations at two limestone caves on Sulawesi, Indonesia, have produced the oldest known archaeological evidence of habitual psychoactive drug use. A fragmentary human jaw with three teeth, recovered from the first cave and radiometrically dated to between 16,000 and 25,000 years BP, displays rounded grooves incompatible with dietary wear but consistent with repetitive sucking and gnawing of a hard, round object. In several teeth the wear had penetrated to the dental pulp, indicating a sustained practice endured despite severe pain. A second Sulawesi cave yielded teeth with identical wear dated to 6,000–8,000 BP, establishing a stratigraphic sequence of the same behaviour spanning roughly 10,000–19,000 years. The researchers inferred betel-nut sucking because modern processed betel use, which involves sliced nuts and added lime, does not produce such grooves. Crucially, chemical residues of arecoline were detected directly on the ancient teeth, and a bioassay confirmed that soaking whole nuts in artificial saliva releases sufficient arecoline to activate human brain receptors. Arecoline is both a stimulant and an analgesic, prompting the hypothesis that the behaviour began as self-medication for dental pain and escalated into addiction. The find extends the archaeological record of habitual drug use by at least several millennia and demonstrates that archaeochemical residue analysis combined with bioassay can confirm behaviours inferred from dental morphology alone.

Where can I use this?

Paper I · 3 Economic Organization

Economic organisation covers communities subsisting on hunting and gathering. Betel-nut sucking by Pleistocene foragers on Sulawesi shows deliberate, sustained exploitation of a psychoactive plant long before agriculture, extending the human–plant relationship into the hunter-gatherer phase. Write it as evidence that plant manipulation for non-dietary ends predates the Neolithic transition.

Paper II · 1.3 Ethno-archaeology in India

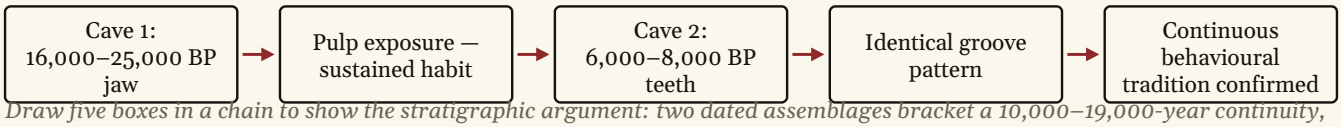
Ethno-archaeology looks for survivals and parallels in living communities. The Sulawesi sequence anchors that ethnographic present in a 16,000-year-old behavioural continuum, strengthening arguments for deep cultural continuity when discussing tribal identity and material culture.

What's in it for your Mains Exam

What dental morphology and chemistry together prove about prehistoric behaviour

Rounded grooves on 16,000–25,000 BP Sulawesi teeth indicate repetitive oral manipulation of a hard object; pulp exposure shows the behaviour persisted despite pain. Morphology alone, however, permits rival explanations. The direct detection of arecoline residues on enamel, paired with a bioassay confirming sufficient release from whole unprocessed nuts to activate brain receptors, closes that gap. The methodological lesson for chronology is that archaeochemical confirmation can elevate inferred behaviour to attested behaviour, shifting a find from supporting to primary evidence in any sequence of human cognitive or social development.

Stratigraphic sequence of betel-nut use across Sulawesi caves



Draw five boxes in a chain to show the stratigraphic argument: two dated assemblages bracket a 10,000–19,000-year continuity, proving habitual drug use is not an isolated event but a cultural tradition extending from late Pleistocene into the Holocene.

Betel nut use: Pleistocene Sulawesi cave evidence

Revision card

Paper I · 1.8 — supplements the prehistoric archaeology and chronology chapter

In one breath

Sulawesi cave teeth dated 16,000–25,000 BP show grooves from whole betel-nut sucking. Arecoline residues confirmed directly on enamel. Pushes habitual psychoactive drug use into the late Pleistocene hunter-gatherer record.

Carry this into the hall

1. Sulawesi teeth dated 16,000–25,000 BP: oldest attested habitual psychoactive drug use.
2. Rounded dental grooves plus arecoline residues: morphology confirmed by chemistry, not inference alone.
3. Two-cave stratigraphic sequence spans 10,000–19,000 years of continuous betel behaviour.
4. Self-medication hypothesis: analgesic arecoline may have initiated habit before addiction set in.
5. Whole-nut sucking, not processed chewing, explains the groove pattern and predates modern use forms.

Numbers worth quoting

16,000–25,000 BP	oldest dated betel-nut use
6,000–8,000 BP	second cave, same wear pattern

Scholars to cite

Archaeochemical residue analysis (method framework)	chemical confirmation	Direct arecoline detection on enamel converts morphological inference into behavioural proof.
Adam Brumm, Griffith University	self-medication hypothesis	Analgesic properties of arecoline suggest pain relief preceded addiction as the behavioural driver.

Concepts to use

archaeochemical residue analysis · dental wear morphology · arecoline bioassay · habitual psychoactive use · late Pleistocene foragers · stratigraphic behavioural sequence · self-medication hypothesis

Case to mention

Two limestone caves, Sulawesi, Evidence of betel-nut use as organised, habitual psychoactive behaviour in Indonesia Pleistocene hunter-gatherers.

Practice

- What does the Sulawesi betel-nut find contribute to the chronology of prehistoric human behaviour? Discuss the archaeochemical methods used to establish the evidence. (10 marks)
- Critically examine how dental morphology and residue analysis together extend the archaeological

record of habitual psychoactive plant use. Use specific prehistoric evidence to support your answer. (20 marks)

Oraon Material Culture: Technological Succession and Continuity

Source: Anthro Bulletin, August 2026 (Anthropos India Foundation) · Material culture of the Oraon (opening section on household implements, tools, dress and utensils)
Paper II · 1.3 — supplements the ethno-archaeology in India chapter

Summary

The Oraon community's household material culture presents a live record of technological coexistence rather than simple displacement. Across twelve artefact categories — including the polo bamboo fish-trap, sil batta grinding stone, dhenki lever-husker, ghani oil press, chulha mud stove, sup winnowing basket, pirda stool, and handi earthen pot — traditional implements made from bamboo, Sargi or Sagun wood, clay, and wild creepers persist alongside modern substitutes such as electric mixers, rice mills, commercial cooking oil, and LPG stoves. The pattern is never clean replacement: a household may own both a sil batta and a mixer, or retain a wooden pirda while adopting chairs. Ritual embeddedness slows displacement most effectively — the chulha is bounded by a prohibition on strangers entering the kitchen, the handi is indispensable in marriage and ancestral worship, and the pirda carries ceremonial foot-washing associations that chairs cannot absorb. Species-specific material choices — Shorea robusta or Tectona grandis for the dhenki, Aristida setacea for the bahri broom, Madhuca longifolia seeds for the ghani — encode ecological knowledge within the artefact itself. The article's analytical contribution is demonstrating that material culture change among the Oraon is gradual, selective, and shaped by the ritual valence of individual objects.

Where can I use this?

Paper I · 3 Economic Organization

Economic organisation covers the articulation of indigenous and market systems. The ghani and dhenki decline as commercial oil and rice mills penetrate the local economy, while ritual-embedded objects like the handi persist. Write it as uneven market penetration — commodity substitution succeeds where objects carry no ceremonial load but fails where they do.

Paper II · 3.3 Sacred Complex and Nature-Man-Spirit Complex

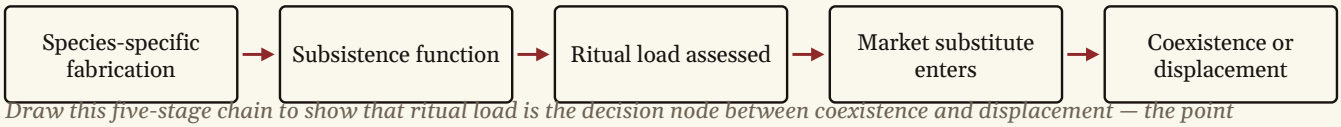
Unit 4.4 covers tribal religions, ritual practices and sacred complexes. The chulha's kitchen prohibition and the handi's role in ancestral worship and marriage ceremony show everyday material culture as a node of sacred practice. Write it as material mediation of sacred boundaries — the object enforces ritual restriction independently of any specialist.

What's in it for your Mains Exam

Why ritual valence determines survival of traditional implements

Artefact	Modern substitute
Handi / chaak pot	Factory vessel
Chulha	LPG stove
Pirda stool	Chair
Dhenki	Rice mill
Polo fish-trap	Net / market fish
Bagirka comb	Plastic comb

Ethno-archaeological reading of the Oraon artefact sequence



Draw this five-stage chain to show that ritual load is the decision node between coexistence and displacement — the point ethno-archaeologists use to infer which past assemblages were ceremonially bounded.

Oraon Material Culture: Technological Succession and Continuity

Revision card

Paper II · 1.3 — supplements the ethno-archaeology in India chapter

In one breath

Oraon households show coexistence, not displacement: mixer alongside sil batta, LPG beside chulha. Ritual-embedded objects like handi and pirda resist replacement longest. Species-specific materials encode ecological knowledge inside each artefact.

Carry this into the hall

1. Twelve Oraon artefact categories show coexistence, never clean replacement by modern equivalents.
2. Ritual-embedded objects — chulha, handi, pirda — resist substitution that purely utilitarian ones cannot.
3. Species-specific materials (Shorea robusta, Aristida setacea) encode ecological knowledge inside the artefact.
4. Ethno-archaeology reads living Oraon sequences to infer past technological succession from present coexistence.
5. Market penetration is uneven: commodity substitution succeeds only where objects carry no ceremonial load.

Scholars to cite

Ethno-archaeology as method	use-life inference	Living Oraon artefact sequences let archaeologists infer past technological succession from present coexistence patterns.
Ritual embeddedness framework	object-bound prohibition	Artefacts carrying sacred load — chulha, handi, pirda — resist commodity substitution that purely utilitarian objects cannot resist.

Concepts to use

technological coexistence · ritual embeddedness · object-bound prohibition · ecological encoding · commodity substitution · material succession · use-life inference

Case to mention

Oraon household artefact inventory, Sambalpur, Odisha	Evidence that ritual valence, not utility, determines which traditional implements survive market penetration.

Practice

- What is ethno-archaeology? Illustrate its method and significance with reference to material culture studies among Indian tribal communities. (10 marks)
- Examine how ritual embeddedness and ecological knowledge shape the pace of technological change in tribal material culture. Use ethnographic evidence to support your answer. (20 marks)

Read for this issue

Every publication scanned for this fortnight, whether or not it yielded a topic.

Economic & Political Weekly, Vol LXI No 38, September 19, 2026
Anthro Bulletin, Volume 7, Issue 8, August 2026 (Anthropos India Foundation, New Delhi)
Down To Earth, 1–30 September 2026
New Scientist, Vol 271 No 3613, 19 September 2026

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