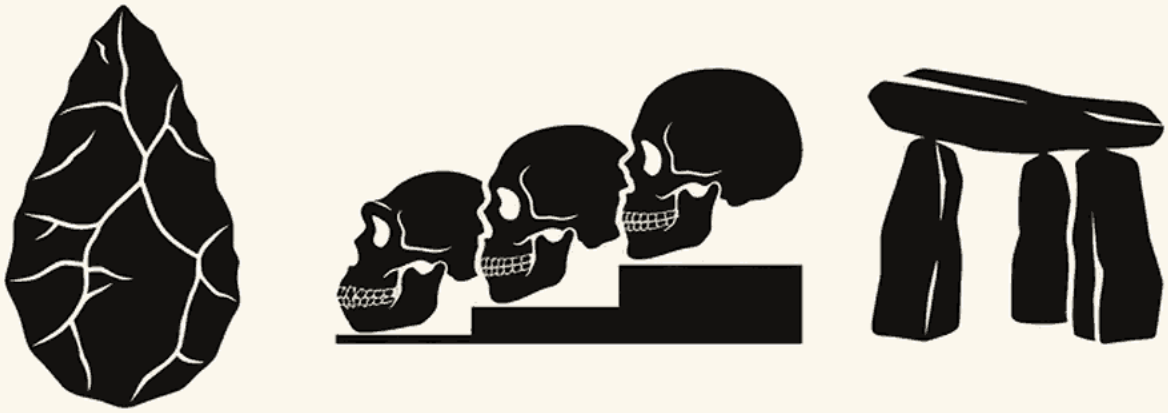
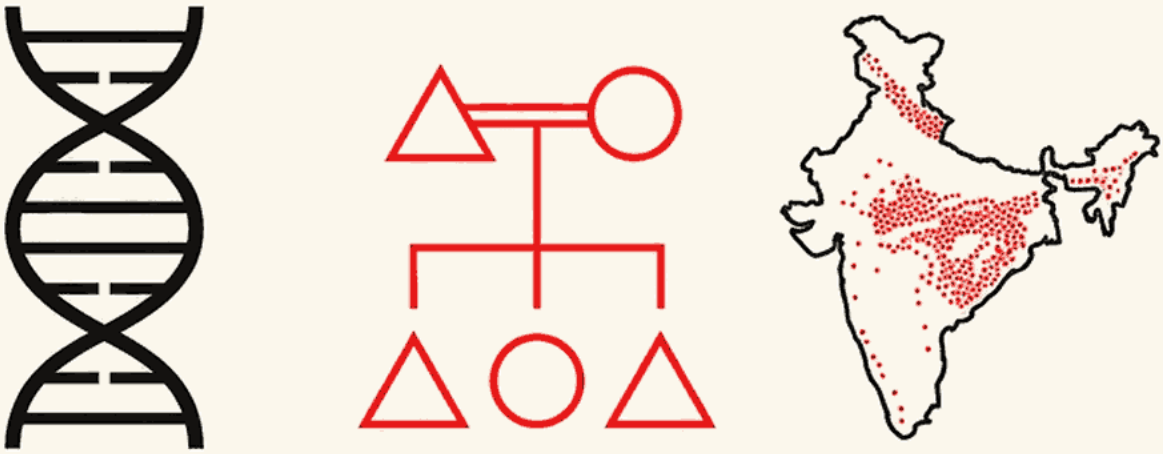
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Maru Meghwal aak fibre craft: ethno-archaeological survival

Source: Down To Earth, 1-15 October 2026 · Desert Yarns: Weaving aak fibre is an indigenous tradition struggling to survive, but can be a major source of livelihood for desert communities

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

Summary

The Maru Meghwal community of Barmer district, Rajasthan, sustains a craft tradition built entirely around Calotropis gigantea, the aak plant. Bark fibres, processed through soaking in buttermilk, twisting, beating and spinning on a local tool called dheri, yield a material called ankala in three thread weights. These threads are woven into charpoys, dari floor mats, livestock ropes and agricultural tools. A second product, bhambhuriya or desert silk, comes from the fruit pods, with silk soaked, made into puni and spun for shawls and mufflers. Bhuraram of Aati village, 65 years old, represents the craft's living memory: trained by the Khadi Board in 1974, he shifted to ankala products around 2000 when the shawl market collapsed. All four of his sons know the craft but work in construction, while two daughters-in-law remain skilled but lack market access. SURE trained forty people and gave twenty looms in 2000; a 2025 Ruma Devi Foundation–NITRA tie-up offers new support. The case exposes a classic survival under threat: indigenous technical knowledge persists and has livelihood potential, but generational rupture driven by market failure and land-use pressure from solar park construction risks terminal loss.

Where can I use this?

Paper II · 1.1 Evolution of Indian Culture and Civilization— Prehistoric (Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic and...

Contributions of tribal cultures to Indian civilisation are a syllabus concern here. Ankala weaving offers a living fibre-processing sequence for ethnoarchaeological comparison. Use it as an analogy for investigating past technologies, not proof of uninterrupted continuity from prehistoric cultures; that requires independent archaeological evidence.

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

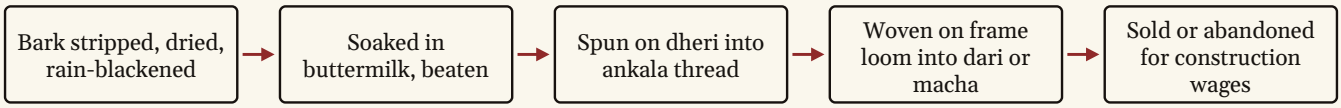
Action anthropology and applied development are this unit's framework. The SURE NGO intervention — forty trainees and twenty frame looms amid continuing market constraints — shows why training needs sustained market support. Write it as evidence that development anthropology must embed craft revival in value-chain infrastructure, not skill transfer alone.

What's in it for your Mains Exam

Why Aak Craft Is a Textbook Ethno-Archaeological Survival

Ethno-archaeology reads living practice as analogue for the past. The Maru Meghwal case qualifies because the entire production sequence — bark stripping, buttermilk soaking, dheri spinning, loom weaving — is locally embedded and can inform hypotheses about past fibre processing; direct continuity requires archaeological evidence. The craft's tool assemblage is locally named and locally made. Yet survival is conditional: Bhuraram holds the knowledge; his sons have left; SURE supplied looms in 2000, but market barriers persist; a 2025 textile partnership offers hope. The case shows that ethno-archaeological survivals are not passive inheritances but active social achievements, sustained only when economic incentives remain viable across generations.

From Bark to Product: The Aak Processing Chain



Draw this five-box chain with a break-arrow before the final box to show the market rupture point — this is where the survival is failing, and examiners credit a diagram that locates the structural problem.

Maru Meghwal aak fibre craft: ethno-archaeological survival

Revision card

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

In one breath

Maru Meghwals of Barmer weave aak bark fibre and pod silk into charpoys, mats and ropes using community-specific tools and knowledge. The account reports Bhuraram's sons taking construction work. A living ethno-archaeological survival now faces generational extinction.

Carry this into the hall

1. Ankala from aak bark; bhambhuriya from pod silk — two products, one community-specific knowledge system.
2. Dheri spinning and buttermilk soaking are documented process markers useful for forming archaeological hypotheses.
3. Bhuraram (Aati) holds living knowledge; all four sons chose construction labour — generational rupture is documented, not projected.
4. SURE trained forty people and supplied twenty looms in 2000; market barriers remain, suggesting hardware alone may not sustain a craft.
5. Ethno-archaeological value lies precisely in the threatened knowledge: once extinct it cannot be excavated, only inferred.

Numbers worth quoting

Rs 1,000 per kg (ankala, 2026)	market value of processed aak fibre
4 kg ankala + 2 days labour per dari	unit production cost structure

Scholars to cite

Ethno-archaeology as method	survivals and parallels	Living craft sequences inform hypotheses about past fibre processing; continuity needs evidence
Indigenous Technical Knowledge framework	community-specific knowledge	Dheri spinning and buttermilk soaking are locally embedded in Meghwal occupational identity

Concepts to use

ethno-archaeological survival · ankala fibre processing · indigenous technical knowledge · generational rupture · occupational identity · desert silk revival · value-chain gap

Case to mention

Maru Meghwal weavers, Aati village, Barmer, Rajasthan	Evidence of a living craft survival facing extinction through market failure and generational rupture

Practice

- What is ethno-archaeology? How does the craft tradition of arts-and-crafts producing communities serve as survivals and parallels for understanding prehistoric cultures in India? (10 marks)
- Second practice question on the next page.

Practice continued

- Discuss the concept of ethno-archaeological survivals with reference to indigenous technical knowledge among arts-and-crafts producing communities in India. What structural threats endanger such survivals, and what role can anthropology play in their documentation and continuity? (20 marks)

Nawakhani: Gond First-Harvest Ritual and Sacred Complex

Source: Anthro Bulletin, Volume 7, Issue 9, September 2026 (Anthropos India Foundation / Anthropos Books, New Delhi) · Nawakhani: When the New Harvest Becomes Sacred: Land, Food and the Gond Relationship with the Sacred
Paper II · 3.3 — supplements the Sacred Complex and Nature-Man-Spirit Complex chapter

Summary

Among the Gond of Nougai village, Bilaspur district, Chhattisgarh, the ritual of Nawakhani is performed each September–October after the paddy harvest. Its governing logic is a strict sequencing: grain moves from field to household kitchen, a first preparation is offered to Budha Dev — a family deity with a small white backyard shrine in one household visited — and only then does the family eat. This order is not convention but cosmological assertion: the agricultural cycle is understood as co-produced by human labour and sacred forces — rain, soil, season — that Budha Dev governs or represents. Because the shrine sits within the household compound rather than a separate temple precinct, the sacred is literally continuous with domestic space. Nature, human society and spirit form a single integrated whole, which is the structural core of the Nature-Man-Spirit Complex. Nawakhani also generates family solidarity: dispersed members gather, converting agricultural labour into collective experience. Generational tension is present — younger, educated Gond members engage differently after wider social integration — yet the foundational act of offering before eating persists, demonstrating cultural adaptation without structural rupture.

Where can I use this?

Paper II · 8.1 Impact of Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and other religions on tribal societies.

This unit examines religious influences on tribal societies. Nawakhani provides a case for investigating change in Gond sacred practice, but worship of Budha Dev alone does not establish Hindu influence or syncretism. Such an argument requires separate historical and ethnographic evidence.

Paper II · 7.2 Social change and contemporary tribal societies

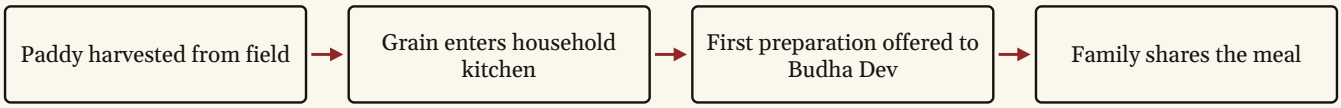
This unit asks how modern democratic institutions and development affect tribal societies. The generational shift in Nawakhani engagement — educated Gond youth participating differently after wider social integration — illustrates how social change operates at the ritual level while the structural form endures. Write it as evidence that development-driven change is partial and uneven, not transformative rupture.

What's in it for your Mains Exam

Nawakhani as a Household-Scale Nature-Man-Spirit Complex

Vidyarthi developed the Sacred Complex through Gaya and the Nature-Man-Spirit Complex through the Malers; the latter is not a pilgrimage-centre model. Nawakhani can illustrate its interaction of ecology, social relations and sacred belief at household level. The sequence — field, kitchen, deity, shared meal — links agricultural production, religious obligation and family solidarity. The shrine observed within one household's backyard shows that sacred practice can be embedded in domestic life. This is an application of the framework, not evidence that household ritual overturns an exclusively village-scale or pilgrimage-scale theory.

Ritual Sequence and Cosmological Logic of Nawakhani



Draw four boxes with arrows. The arrow from box two to three crosses the sacred threshold — label it 'domestication of the sacred'. This shows examiners you understand that the ritual's power lies in sequencing, not merely in offering.

Nawakhani: Gond First-Harvest Ritual and Sacred Complex

Revision card

Paper II · 3.3 — supplements the Sacred Complex and Nature-Man-Spirit Complex chapter

In one breath

Gond of Nougai offer first paddy to Budha Dev before eating; one observed shrine stood within domestic space. Nature, human society and spirit form one integrated sacred whole. Core ritual persists despite generational change.

Carry this into the hall

1. Nawakhani: first paddy offered to Budha Dev before any family member eats — sequencing is the ritual's cosmological argument.
2. One observed shrine stood in a domestic backyard, linking sacred practice with household space.
3. Nature (rain, soil, season), man (farming household) and spirit (Budha Dev) form the triad — illustrated here at household scale.
4. Post-offering shared meal converts dispersed agricultural labour into collective kin solidarity — ritual produces social cohesion.
5. Younger educated Gond engage differently but core act persists: continuity with change; secularisation is not established.

Scholars to cite

L.P. Vidyarthi Nature-Man-Spirit Complex	Nature-Man-Spirit Complex	Nawakhani unites land and season (nature), farming household (man) and Budha Dev (spirit) in one integrated ritual whole.
Victor Turner, ritual process	communitas	The shared meal invites comparison with communitas; the account does not establish suspension of everyday hierarchy.
Clifford Geertz, interpretive anthropology	religion as cultural system	Sequencing grain-to-deity-to-family encodes a cosmological model where sacred forces are agricultural co-producers.

Concepts to use

domestication of the sacred · ritual sequencing · household deity complex · co-production cosmology · agrarian sacred calendar · adaptation without rupture · sacred-domestic continuum

Case to mention

Nawakhani ritual, Nougai village Gond, Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh	Evidence that Nature-Man-Spirit Complex operates at household, not only village, scale.

Practice

- With reference to tribal communities in India, explain how the Nature-Man-Spirit Complex operates at the household level. Illustrate with a suitable ethnographic example. (10 marks)
- Second practice question on the next page.

Practice continued

- Critically examine the concept of the Sacred Complex as developed by L.P. Vidyarthi. Distinguish it from Nature-Man-Spirit Complex and apply the latter to a first-harvest ritual. (20 marks)

Stone-carving communities around Konark: ethnoarchaeology

Source: Anthro Bulletin, Volume 7, Issue 9, September 2026 (Anthropos India Foundation / Anthropos Books, New Delhi) · Anthropologist of the Month: Dr. P. Anuradha

Paper II · 1.3 — supplements the ethno-archaeology chapter

Summary

Dr P. Anuradha of IGRMS Bhopal conducted doctoral fieldwork on the traditional stone-carving communities living around the Konark Sun Temple in Odisha, using them as a living analogue for the technology visible in the archaeological record. Her central methodological claim is that the operational chain documented among craftspeople today — stone selection, quarrying, carving sequences, transportation logistics, and skill transmission through apprenticeship — can inform comparisons with archaeological remains. She conducted a small sculpture-making experiment with debitage analysis, exploring material traces that can inform archaeological interpretation. The interview does not report a controlled comparison with excavated assemblages. The study thus bridges anthropological fieldwork with archaeological interpretation, demonstrating how social organisation around the craft — who holds knowledge, how it passes between generations, and how it is valued — can inform archaeological hypotheses. Anuradha further argues that communities must be treated as active knowledge-holders rather than passive subjects, and advocates 3D documentation, digital archiving and GIS as useful tools for contemporary ethnoarchaeological fieldwork. The scope of her broader IGRMS work — spanning pottery, vernacular architecture, textiles, PVTGs and pastoral communities in Rajouri-Poonch — positions this Konark study as one node in a larger comparative ethnoarchaeological programme.

Where can I use this?

Paper II · 1.1 Evolution of Indian Culture and Civilization— Prehistoric (Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic and...

Unit 1.1 asks how tribal and craft communities contributed to Indian civilisation. The Konark stone-carvers provide living craft analogies relevant to historical stone technology. Use their practices to frame archaeological questions; direct descent from medieval or protohistoric craft lineages requires independent evidence.

Paper I · 1.3 Main branches of Anthropology, their scope and relevance

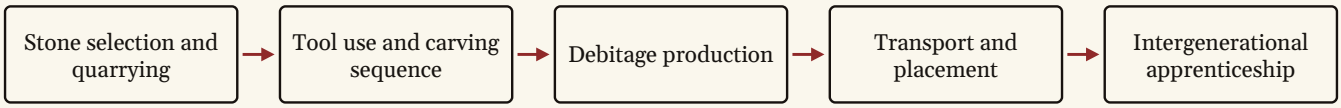
Unit 1.3 defines archaeological anthropology and its relationship to social anthropology. Anuradha's debitage analysis conducted alongside community fieldwork exemplifies how archaeological method and ethnographic fieldwork are integrated within a single sub-disciplinary frame. Write it as a model of what archaeological anthropology looks like in practice.

What's in it for your Mains Exam

From fieldwork to assemblage: the debitage method as ethnoarchaeological bridge

The Konark study combines craft fieldwork with debitage analysis from a small sculpture-making experiment. This offers a route from observed production to hypotheses about archaeological remains, rather than establishing equivalence between modern debris and ancient assemblages. Anuradha also examined stone selection, quarrying, carving, transport and skill transmission, connecting technical practices with social organisation. For exam answers, distinguish the documented method from its potential application: comparison becomes stronger when production conditions and archaeological context are independently assessed. Living craft analogies can generate testable propositions, but the interview does not report a controlled validation against excavated temple-site debris.

Operational chain of the Konark stone-carvers



Draw five boxes with arrows. Label each stage. Add a return arrow from apprenticeship back to selection, showing the cycle of knowledge reproduction. This illustrates the chain's social and technical dimensions.

Stone-carving communities around Konark: ethnoarchaeology

Revision card

Paper II · 1.3 — supplements the ethno-archaeology chapter

In one breath

Anuradha's Konark study uses living stone-carvers as analogues for ancient temple-construction technology. Debitage analysis from a small sculpture experiment informs archaeological hypotheses. Communities are framed as active knowledge-holders, not passive subjects.

Carry this into the hall

1. Debitage experiment links living craft with archaeological questions.
2. Operational chain maps quarrying through apprenticeship as a socially organised sequence.
3. Communities are knowledge-holders; extractive documentation ethics are rejected.
4. 3D archiving and GIS extend ethnoarchaeology beyond the notebook era.
5. Konark study bridges Paper II 1.3's two demands: craft community and archaeological method.

Scholars to cite

P. Anuradha, IGRMS	debitage analogy	stone-waste analysis helps frame hypotheses about archaeological production remains
Operational chain (chaîne opératoire) framework	technological sequence	maps quarrying, carving and skill transmission, linking technical stages with social organisation
Ethnoarchaeology as method	living analogue	uses living craft practice to develop hypotheses about past technological choices

Concepts to use

debitage analysis · operational chain · living analogue · sculpture experiment · skill transmission · knowledge-holder · 3D documentation

Case to mention

Konark Sun Temple stone-carving communities, Odisha	evidence that living craft communities generate testable archaeological analogues

Practice

- What is ethno-archaeology? How does the study of living stone-carving communities around Konark contribute to the interpretation of ancient temple-construction technology? (10 marks)
- Survivals and parallels among arts-and-crafts producing communities are central to ethno-archaeology in India. Discuss with reference to specific fieldwork examples, examining both the methodological strengths and limitations of the living-analogue approach. (20 marks)

Insider–Outsider Positionality in Bodo Handloom Fieldwork

Source: Anthro Bulletin, September 2026 (Anthropos India Foundation newsletter) · Returning to a World Once Familiar: Reflections on Fieldwork, Memory and Positionality, by Dr Rishma Basumatary, Anthro Bulletin September 2026

Paper I · 8 — supplements the research methods chapter

Summary

Dr Rishma Basumatary's six-month ethnographic fieldwork in Sundrijhora, a Bodo handloom weaving village in Kokrajhar district, Assam, generates three methodological insights about insider–outsider positionality. First, cultural proximity does not guarantee unmediated understanding: belonging is continuously negotiated through social interaction and life histories rather than fixed by birth. Second, the tension between familiarity and distance proved analytically productive — activities that appeared ordinary in childhood acquired new ethnographic significance through sustained participant observation, forcing examination of culturally embedded assumptions. Third, cultural familiarity must be distinguished from experiential knowledge: Basumatary had always known women wove at household looms, but the labour, technical discipline and social obligations sustaining the practice became visible only through systematic fieldwork. The central ethnographic finding is si thwrnai saori, a reciprocal labour exchange for warping, in which neighbouring women collectively untangle yarn and prepare looms while simultaneously exchanging news and circulating craft knowledge across generations. Informants noted that mobile phones have reshaped but not displaced these gatherings. Basumatary argues for liminal positionality — neither fully inside nor fully outside — as an analytically useful location enabling both cultural intimacy and critical distance. Methods included participant observation, informal conversations, everyday activity participation and reflexive analysis.

Where can I use this?

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

Development anthropology requires researchers who can bridge technical and community knowledge systems. Basumatary's distinction between cultural familiarity and experiential knowledge shows that an insider-trained anthropologist maps craft obligations and reciprocal networks that outsiders may overlook. Write it as the methodological foundation for participatory, community-grounded development intervention.

Paper I · 6 Anthropological theories

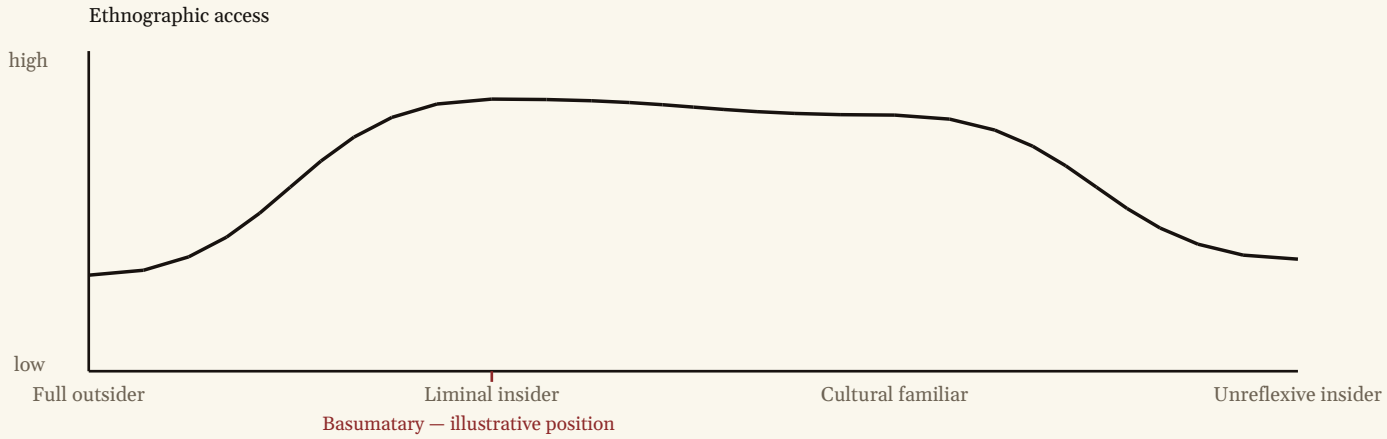
Postmodernist anthropology, associated with reflexive critique of ethnographic authority, makes the researcher's positionality a central analytic problem. Basumatary's liminal positioning and reflexive analysis operationalise that demand in an Indian field context. Write it as Indian evidence for the postmodern turn's insistence that the ethnographer's location shapes the knowledge produced.

What's in it for your Mains Exam

Three Methodological Lessons from Liminal Positionality

- Cultural proximity does not equal understanding: Basumatary shares Bodo identity yet years of higher education created experiential distance, showing belonging must be actively negotiated, not assumed.
- Familiarity-distance tension is productive: childhood-familiar activities defamiliarised through sustained observation reveal assumptions embedded in cultural knowledge that researchers may overlook.
- Si thwrnai saori — warping labour exchange — became better understood through participant observation beyond childhood familiarity, distinguishing knowing that a practice exists from understanding its labour, obligation and knowledge-transmission functions.

Positionality as a Methodological Continuum



Treat this curve as a conceptual illustration, not a measured relationship: familiarity and critical distance can aid research, but no universally optimal insider–outsider position is established.

Insider–Outsider Positionality in Bodo Handloom Fieldwork

Revision card

Paper I · 8 — supplements the research methods chapter

In one breath

Basumatary's Bodo fieldwork shows cultural proximity does not equal understanding; familiarity and distance together enable better ethnography. Si thwrnai saori, reciprocal warping labour, sustains reciprocity and craft transmission. Liminal positionality is a methodological asset, not a liability.

Carry this into the hall

1. Cultural proximity is not understanding; belonging is negotiated, not inherited.
2. Liminal positionality — between inside and outside — can combine intimacy and critical distance.
3. Si thwrnai saori: warping labour exchange that also circulates craft knowledge and maintains reciprocity.
4. Experiential knowledge gap: knowing a practice exists differs from grasping its labour and social obligations.
5. Reflexive analysis connects personal experience with methodological understanding.

Scholars to cite

Bronislaw Malinowski	participant observation	long-term immersion reveals what informants take for granted; si thwrnai saori gains context through it.

Concepts to use

liminal positionality · cultural intimacy · experiential knowledge gap · reflexive analysis · reciprocal labour exchange · negotiated belonging · analytic defamiliarisation

Case to mention

Sundrijhora village, Kokrajhar, Assam — Bodo handloom weavers	a case of liminal positionality combining cultural intimacy with critical distance.

Practice

- Discuss the concept of insider–outsider positionality in anthropological fieldwork. How does liminal positionality enhance ethnographic understanding? (10 marks)
- Critically examine the methodological challenges and advantages of conducting fieldwork within one's own cultural community. Illustrate with reference to participant observation and reflexivity. (20 marks)

Forest Eviction, Conservation and Tribal Displacement in Assam

Source: Economic & Political Weekly, Vol LXI No 39, September 26, 2026 · Conflicts around Forest Reserves in Assam: Land, Politics, and People

Paper II · 6.2, 6.3, 7.2, 7.3, 9.1 — supplements the forest policy and tribal displacement chapter

Summary

Gogoi and Singha trace Assam's forest governance crisis to colonial land law. The Wasteland Rules (1838) and Bengal Forest Act (1865) criminalised indigenous forest use and converted land to tea estates, creating the dispossession that drives encroachment today. Three waves of peasant migration followed: state-backed colonisation in the early twentieth century, left-wing mobilisation in the 1950s, and spontaneous movement in the 1970s–80s. Between 1930 and 1950 roughly 6,07,072 hectares of forestland were converted for agriculture. A 2003 estimate placed encroachment at 12.77% of Assam's forest area. The cases are stark: Behali Wildlife Sanctuary has had nearly 60% of its area illegally occupied since the 1980s; over 40,000 people reside inside Sonai-Rupai, where politicians distributed land deeds to encroachers framed as original inhabitants; at Amchang over 700 families were reportedly evicted in November 2017. Kaziranga saw 24 persons killed under militarised anti-poaching in 2014 alone. The Forest Rights Act 2006 has been inconsistently applied: documentation requirements disadvantage the landless, and in Sixth Schedule areas, FRA implementation requires coordination with autonomous councils. The authors argue that evictions are politically selective. The authors call for participatory governance treating communities as conservation partners.

Where can I use this?

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

Unit 6.2 is anchored in land alienation as the root problem of tribal communities. The colonial dispossession documented here — Wasteland Rules stripping indigenous tenure, Forest Act criminalising forest use — is the originating mechanism. Write it as colonial-era legal alienation feeding three waves of encroachment and culminating in eviction without rehabilitation.

Paper II · 7.3 The concept of ethnicity

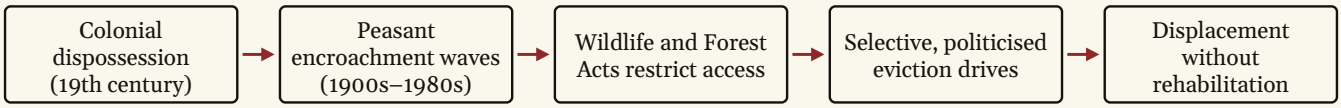
Unit 7.3 is organised around ethnicity, ethnic conflict and unrest among tribal communities. Sonai-Rupai's politically distributed land deeds and Amchang's targeted evictions of marginalised groups illustrate how ethnic identity determines who is protected and who is expelled. Write it as conservation policy converted into an arena of ethnic-political competition.

What's in it for your Mains Exam

Three Waves of Encroachment and the Policy Contradiction

Colonial law first dispossessed Assam's forest communities; conservation law then recriminalised their presence without resolving landlessness. Three migration waves — state-backed colonisation, 1950s left mobilisation, 1970s–80s spontaneous movement — produced what Gogoi and Singha call the peasantisation of forestland. Under FRA, the 75-year residence criterion applies to Other Traditional Forest Dwellers, not forest-dwelling Scheduled Tribes. Evidentiary barriers and Sixth Schedule coordination complicate implementation. Eviction thus lands hardest on those the FRA was designed to protect — eligible forest-dwelling STs and OTFDs affected by floods and erosion.

Conservation Law to Militarised Eviction: A Causal Chain



Draw five linked boxes across the page; the arrow from box 3 to 4 should be labelled 'FRA recognition gaps' to show the policy gap that converts conservation law into eviction without rights.

Forest Eviction, Conservation and Tribal Displacement in Assam

Revision card

Paper II · 6.2, 6.3, 7.2, 7.3, 9.1 — supplements the forest policy and tribal displacement chapter

In one breath

Colonial land law dispossessed Assam's forest communities, driving three waves of encroachment into protected areas. Conservation legislation then criminalised that presence without resolving landlessness. The authors argue that eviction decisions are politically selective.

Carry this into the hall

1. Colonial land law (19th century) criminalised indigenous forest use; that dispossession is the root of encroachment today.
2. A 2003 estimate: 12.77% encroached; source-reported cases: Behali 60%, Sonai-Rupai 40,000 people.
3. FRA: 75-year residence criterion applies to OTFDs, not STs; Sixth Schedule does not nullify the Act.
4. Kaziranga: 24 killed in 2014 under militarised conservation — conservation policy as coercive state power.
5. Baruah and Dutta link selective eviction to unequal power and political patronage.

Numbers worth quoting

6,07,072 hectares	forestland converted for agriculture, 1930–1950
12.77%	Assam forest encroachment, 2003 estimate

Scholars to cite

Muok et al. (2021) and Chatterjee (2019)	governance as struggle	Forest governance involves contested authority; political power can shape conservation decisions.
Baruah (2023)	selective eviction	Baruah argues that Amchang's evictions targeted politically powerless communities, highlighting unequal power in conservation enforcement.
Dutta (2018)	patron-client networks	The cited account links differential eviction in Assam's reserved forests to political patronage.

Concepts to use

militarised conservation · political selectiveness of eviction · peasantisation of forestland · documentation barrier · participatory governance · colonial land alienation · OTFD dilution

Case to mention

Amchang Wildlife Sanctuary, Guwahati — 700 families evicted 2017	Case of disputed land rights and unequal power in eviction decisions.

Practice

- Critically examine how colonial forest legislation continues to shape tribal displacement and eviction in post-independence India, with reference to Assam. (10 marks)
- 'Conservation without participation is dispossession by another name.' Discuss this proposition in the context of forest rights legislation and eviction policies affecting tribal communities in Northeast India. (20 marks)

Bharat Adivasi Party: Adivasiyat and Bhil electoral assertion

Source: Economic & Political Weekly, Vol LXI No 39, September 26, 2026 · Is Small Significant? Deciphering the Success of a Small Party in a Two-party State

Paper II · 7.3, 9.3 — supplements the ethnicity and tribal political movements chapter

Summary

Lodha and Takhar analyse the Bharat Adivasi Party, formed in 2023 in the Vagad–Mewar belt of southern Rajasthan among Bhil Scheduled Tribe communities. In the 2023 Rajasthan assembly elections, the two-month-old party won three seats from only 27 contested, securing 16.68% of valid votes in those constituencies — 2.37% statewide, comparable to the Rashtriya Loktantrik Party which contested 78 seats. In the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, BAP leader Rajkumar Roat won the Banswara ST-reserved seat with over half the votes, defeating BJP by approximately 2.5 lakh votes. BAP has seats in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and the Lok Sabha. Three analytical lenses explain the rise: a regional culture of resistance rooted in the Adivasi Parivar sociocultural network; mobilisation of Adivasi youth through social media down to the fala, the smallest socio-territorial unit; and articulation of neglected demands — Bhil Pradesh statehood and an Adivasi identity explicitly distinct from Hindutva. The sharpest ideological contest is over Rana Punja Bhil: Hindutva groups cast him as an anti-Muslim nationalist symbol, Adivasi activists as a defender of tribal land. Bhangya Bhukya frames BAP as Adivasi autonomous politics — of, by, and through Adivasis — resisting absorption into non-Adivasi parties. Using Wyatt's typology and Kailash's distinction, the authors classify BAP as a regionalist rather than merely regionally located party, one that has altered electoral outcomes and forced INC to recalibrate alliances without yet becoming a third pole.

Where can I use this?

Paper II · 9.3 Contributions of anthropology to the understanding of regionalism, communalism and ethnic and political...

Unit 9.3 asks anthropology to illuminate ethnic and political movements. BAP's rise illustrates how Adivasiyat — an ethno-territorial identity built on shared symbols, fala-level social networks, and a contested hero — generates autonomous electoral organisation. Write it as a case where anthropological analysis of identity construction explains dimensions of a movement beyond electoral competition alone.

Paper II · 7.2 Social change and contemporary tribal societies

Unit 7.2 concerns modern democratic institutions and their impact on tribal societies. BAP demonstrates that ST-reserved constituencies and democratic competition can become instruments of Adivasi self-representation rather than co-optation. Write it as evidence that democratic institutions catalyse autonomous tribal political agency when mainstream parties neglect identity-based demands.

What's in it for your Mains Exam

Three engines of BAP's electoral breakthrough

Engine	Mechanism and outcome
Culture of resistance	Adivasi Parivar network supplied organisational depth across Vagad; historical anti-dispossession grievances pre-mobilised voters.
Fala-level social media	Youth activists reached the smallest socio-territorial unit via Facebook and Instagram, bypassing party machinery of INC and BJP.
Neglected demands	Bhil Pradesh statehood and Adivasi identity distinct from Hindutva gave voters a programme neither national party offered.

Punja Bhil and the battle over ethnic symbols



Draw this five-box flow to show how a single symbol becomes an ideological battlefield; the protest can illustrate how contested symbols interact with material grievances in electoral mobilisation.

Bharat Adivasi Party: Adivasiyat and Bhil electoral assertion

Revision card

Paper II · 7.3, 9.3 — supplements the ethnicity and tribal political movements chapter

In one breath

BAP, formed 2023 among Bhil Scheduled Tribes, won three assembly seats from 27 contested and a Lok Sabha seat at Banswara. It mobilises Adivasiyat — Adivasi autonomous identity — against Hindutva co-optation. The authors describe it as regionalist, without yet constituting a statewide third pole.

Carry this into the hall

1. BAP won 3 of 27 contested seats; 16.68% is its vote share in those seats.
2. Banswara Lok Sabha won by 2.5 lakh votes; the INC candidate finished fourth.
3. Fala-level social media offered an alternative to established party mobilisation networks.
4. Punja Bhil symbol contest shows Hindutva co-optation triggers Adivasi counter-assertion, not absorption.
5. Regionalist, not yet a third pole: wider electoral expansion remains a question.

Numbers worth quoting

16.68%	BAP vote share in its 27 constituencies, 2023
2.5 lakh	Banswara Lok Sabha victory margin, 2024

Scholars to cite

Bhangya Bhukya	Adivasi autonomous politics	BAP embodies politics of, by, and through Adivasis, resisting absorption as mere representation within non-Adivasi parties.
Wyatt (2019) and Kailash (2014)	regionalist party typology	BAP is regionalist — identity and territory drive its appeal — without yet constituting a statewide third pole.

Concepts to use

Adivasiyat · culture of resistance · fala-level mobilisation · regionalist party · symbol contestation · electoral expansion · ST-reserved constituency

Case to mention

Bharat Adivasi Party, Vagad–Mewar belt, Rajasthan	Evidence that Adivasiyat converts ethnic identity into autonomous electoral force.

Practice

- Examine the rise of ethnicity-based regional parties among Scheduled Tribes with reference to the concept of Adivasiyat. (10 marks)
- Ethnic identity and electoral assertion are increasingly inseparable in post-colonial tribal politics. Discuss with suitable examples from contemporary India. (20 marks)

India's CRS, SRS and NFHS: structural gaps and spatial reform

Source: Economic & Political Weekly, Vol LXI No 39, September 26, 2026 · What Ails India's Civil Registration and Vital Statistics System: Proposal for Integrating Data Architecture

Paper I · 11.1, 11.2, 11.3 — supplements the demography chapter

Summary

India's demographic measurement rests on three systems operating in institutional isolation. The Civil Registration System, grounded in the Registration of Births and Deaths Act 1969, is legally mandated but chronically incomplete: under-registration is worst in rural areas, among home births and in socio-economically marginal populations, and causes of death are frequently absent or wrongly certified. The Sample Registration System, a dual-record design covering roughly eight million people, was created explicitly to compensate for CRS weaknesses and provides annual birth, death and infant-mortality rates, with maternal-mortality estimates pooling three years. Its sample design prevents reliable district-level estimates. The National Family Health Survey, a stratified multistage household survey conducted roughly every five years, contributed for the first time in its fifth round a question on death registration, but measures only perceived registration status and cannot track completeness in real time. A structural flaw links all three: spatial misalignment. SRS and NFHS use Census Enumeration Blocks or villages as sampling units; CRS uses rural and urban registration units whose boundaries may differ from survey sampling units. The reform proposed is to make the Census Enumeration Block, already the urban primary sampling unit for SRS and NFHS, the common spatial denominator for all three systems, enabling direct record validation, sub-district estimation and integration with Aadhaar and welfare registers.

Where can I use this?

Paper I · 11.2 Demographic theories-biological, social and cultural

Demographic transition theory requires reliable natality and mortality series to track stage movement; the CRS-SRS divergence documented here shows that India's transition metrics rest on non-comparable data streams. Use it to argue that the empirical base for applying biological and social demographic theory in India is structurally compromised without system integration.

Paper II · 2 Demographic profile of India—Ethnic and linguistic elements in the Indian population and their distribution

India's demographic profile unit requires understanding of how population structure is measured and where those measurements fail. Differences between registration and survey units complicate local comparisons; they do not by themselves invalidate published fertility differentials.

What's in it for your Mains Exam

How spatial misalignment limits local cross-system comparison

System	Geographic unit
CRS	Rural and urban registration units
SRS	Village or CEB (~8 million covered)
NFHS	CEB in urban areas; periodic
Proposed reform	CEB common to all three

From fragmentation to integrated surveillance: the CEB reform pathway



Draw left-to-right with arrows; label the gap between nodes 1 and 2 'spatial misalignment barrier' to show the reform's single critical hinge

India's CRS, SRS and NFHS: structural gaps and spatial reform

Revision card

Paper I · 11.1, 11.2, 11.3 — supplements the demography chapter

In one breath

CRS, SRS and NFHS measure vital events using different methods and spatial units, limiting direct local comparisons. CRS under-registers home and rural deaths; SRS cannot reach district level. Aligning all three to Census Enumeration Blocks would enable real-time demographic surveillance.

Carry this into the hall

1. CRS under-registers home and rural deaths; causes of death often absent or wrong.
2. SRS dual-record design compensates but cannot reach district level — a scale floor.
3. NFHS-5 first asked about registration status but captures only perceived, not actual, completeness.
4. Registration-unit versus survey-unit mismatch complicates local CRS-SRS comparisons.
5. CEB as shared spatial unit enables Aadhaar linkage, hotspot ML, and SDG accountability.

Numbers worth quoting

150–180 households per CEB	smallest census spatial unit proposed as common denominator

Scholars to cite

Kumar, Dandona and Dandona (2019)	completeness of death registration	eastern, central and north-eastern states fall below national CoRD average, revealing spatially patterned under-registration
National Geospatial Policy 2022	common spatial denominator	supports geospatial integration; CEB harmonisation remains the authors' specific reform proposal

Concepts to use

spatial misalignment · completeness of death registration · dual-record system · under-registration hotspot · intercensal panel linkage · registration-entitlement nudge · demographic silo

Case to mention

CRS-SRS death-count divergence, 2011–2024, high-population states	illustrates how differing geographic units complicate comparison of mortality figures

Practice

- Discuss the structural limitations of India's vital statistics systems and their implications for measuring mortality and fertility. (10 marks)
- Critically examine the institutional and spatial barriers to integrating India's Civil Registration System, Sample Registration System and National Family Health Survey. What reforms would make demographic surveillance reliable enough to inform population policy? (20 marks)

Bourdieu's Symbolic Violence and Linguistic Inequality in Karnataka

Source: Economic & Political Weekly (EPW), Vol LXI No 41, October 10, 2026 · Language, Power, and Symbolic Violence: Interpreting the Recent Kannada Assertion
Paper I · 7 — supplements the culture, language and communication chapter

Summary

Bourdieu's concepts of symbolic violence, linguistic capital, and misrecognition illuminate the power asymmetry between Hindi and Kannada in urban Karnataka. Symbolic violence operates through misrecognition: dominated groups consent to their subordination by treating dominant arrangements as natural. Hindi is misrecognised as India's national language — constitutionally inaccurate; Hindi is the Union's official language, with English also used — granting it illegitimate symbolic authority over regional languages. This asymmetry is institutionally reproduced through uneven implementation of the 1968 three-language formula: it also envisaged a modern Indian language, preferably southern, in Hindi-speaking states. The costs are not merely cultural. A Kannada speaker paid three extra months of interest on a loan because a Hindi-speaking loan officer could not process a Kannada communication — a direct conversion of linguistic disadvantage into economic loss. Conversely, Marwari traders in Karnataka who learned Kannada successfully converted linguistic capital into commercial social capital. The article reports a north Indian who spent eight years in Bengaluru without Kannada but learned basic French in two to three months in France; this suggests social incentives, not a general causal rule. Durkheim's framing of language as a social fact — external and coercive — explains why dominant-language challenges provoke social enforcement, including overt coercion. The article distinguishes this coercion from the subtler symbolic violence through which Hindi operates, and calls for equivalent regional-language training for private-sector transfers as already exists for IAS and IPS officers.

Where can I use this?

Paper II · 5.2 Linguistic and religious minorities and their social, political and economic status.

Unit 5.2 concerns linguistic minorities and their social, political and economic status. The Kannada cases offer a comparison, not proof of state-level minority status: institutional non-recognition at airports, economic penalties on loan repayment, and the unequal adaptation burden associated with uneven language-policy implementation. Distinguish institutional linguistic disadvantage from minority status within a state.

Paper II · 9.3 Contributions of anthropology to the understanding of regionalism, communalism and ethnic and political...

Unit 9.3 asks anthropology to explain regionalism and political movements. Kannada assertion — filming a non-compliant bank manager, market pressure on migrant traders — is a political response to a structurally asymmetric language-power regime, not mere nativism. Bourdieu's field theory frames such assertion as counter-mobilisation of symbolic capital against misrecognised Hindi dominance.

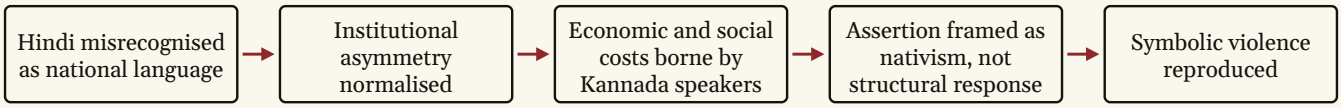
What's in it for your Mains Exam

How Institutional Design Reproduces Linguistic Symbolic Violence

Domain	Hindi advantage / Kannada cost
Three-language formula (1968)	Reciprocal language study envisaged; implementation has been uneven
Airport infrastructure, Bengaluru	Staff unable to serve Kannada speakers; mother tongue effectively absent
Loan repayment penalty	Three extra months' interest on 8 lakh loan due to Hindi-only officer

IAS/IPS training illustration	Author cites four-month regional-language training and proposes similar employer provision

Misrecognition as the Engine of Linguistic Hierarchy



Draw this five-box chain to show that Bourdieu's symbolic violence is a cycle, not a single act — the examiner wants process, not definition

Bourdieu's Symbolic Violence and Linguistic Inequality in Karnataka

Revision card

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

In one breath

Hindi's misrecognition as national language reproduces symbolic violence through institutional asymmetry, including uneven three-language-policy implementation. Linguistic disadvantage carries direct economic costs. The reported anecdote illustrates social incentives, not a general cause of language non-acquisition.

Carry this into the hall

1. Symbolic violence works through misrecognition: speakers consent to hierarchies they experience as natural.
2. Hindi is not a national language; distinguish the 1968 formula's text from uneven implementation.
3. Loan-interest penalty converts linguistic asymmetry into measurable economic loss — symbolic violence has material costs.
4. Reported anecdote: eight years in Bengaluru without Kannada, but basic French in two to three months; incentives matter, not a universal rule.
5. Kannada assertion is counter-mobilisation of symbolic capital, not nativism; overt coercion remains condemnable even when the grievance is structural.

Numbers worth quoting

8 lakh loan, three extra months' interest	economic cost of linguistic asymmetry

Scholars to cite

Pierre Bourdieu	symbolic violence	dominant language hierarchies persist because subordinated speakers misrecognise them as natural, not as power
Bourdieu (linguistic capital)	capital conversion	Marwari traders show linguistic capital translating directly into economic and social capital in local markets
Émile Durkheim	language as social fact	language's external, coercive character explains why dominant-language challenges provoke collective social enforcement

Concepts to use

symbolic violence · misrecognition · linguistic capital · capital conversion · unequal adaptation pressure · three-language asymmetry · language-learning incentives

Case to mention

Marwari traders in Karnataka and a Bengaluru-to-France migrant	illustrative cases of social incentives in language learning, not proof of a universal causal rule

Practice

- Examine how Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence explains the reproduction of linguistic inequality in multilingual societies. Illustrate with reference to the Hindi–Kannada relationship in India. (10 marks)
- Language is both a social fact and a form of capital. Critically analyse how institutional policies and everyday interaction together sustain linguistic hierarchies in post-colonial India. (20 marks)

Kosi basin indigenous flood knowledge vs formal early warning

Source: Down To Earth, 1-15 October 2026 · Caught off guard: Rapidly changing floods outpace early warning systems in Hindu Kush Himalayas

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

Summary

In CRED's 2025 natural-hazard records, floods ranked second in event frequency and deaths. The Kosi river system in Bihar exemplifies how formal disaster governance and indigenous knowledge systems operate in mutual isolation, with devastating consequences. In October 2021, roughly 200,000 cusecs of water was released at 2 am from Nepal's Bhimnagar barrage onto downstream Bihar villages. Bihar's Water Resources Department issued no warning because 200,000 cusecs fell below the 300,000-cusecs threshold at which alerts are triggered, and the Kosi barrage's rated capacity of 900,000 cusecs further conditioned official perception of risk. Meanwhile, infrastructure built for the Kosi mega bridge had compressed the river passage from roughly 9–10 km between parallel embankments to 1.5–2 km, intensifying bank erosion. Marginalised communities, including the Musahar, possess a layered indigenous flood-prediction system that reads river colour, texture, vortex patterns and flow volume using categories called saa, dhaul and garki to judge boat safety. Seasonal heuristics link flood recession to full kaans grass blossom and the Dussehra festival. Recent untimely floods have disrupted both signals. Despite formal endorsement in India's National Policy on Disaster Management and the Sendai Framework, the article finds minimal integration of indigenous knowledge into early warning practice. The article argues for co-designed warning systems, transboundary HKH data sharing and infrastructure planning that treats hydraulic constriction as a manufactured flood risk.

Where can I use this?

Paper II · 7.1 Deprivation of Scheduled Castes and other weaker sections

Use this case to compare identity, marginalisation and collective voice. Musahar are a Scheduled Caste community in Bihar, not a Scheduled Tribe; rural flood exclusion should not be presented as direct evidence of tribal unrest. The strongest links are Paper II 7.1 and 9.2.

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

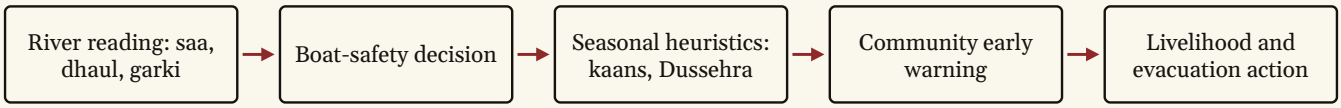
Use the Kosi case comparatively, not as direct tribal evidence. River engineering and alert thresholds can compound rural poverty and land insecurity. Musahar are Scheduled Caste; Paper II 7.1 and 9.2 are the direct links, while tribal vulnerability needs a separately identified tribal example.

What's in it for your Mains Exam

How administrative thresholds manufacture invisibility

The article reports that local flood warnings typically follow discharge above 300,000 cusecs at the Kosi barrage, whose estimated capacity is 900,000 cusecs. The October 2021 release of 200,000 cusecs at 2 am brought no warning, yet damaged villages downstream of infrastructure that narrowed the river passage from 9–10 km to 1.5–2 km. The anthropological argument is structural: threshold design reflects engineering capacity, not lived vulnerability. Communities on low plinths above agricultural fields experience 200,000 cusecs as catastrophic precisely where embankment constriction has accelerated bank erosion. Anthropology's contribution is to expose how the metric itself erases the communities most exposed.

From river colour to flood calendar: the indigenous system



Draw as a five-box chain; add a broken line after box 3 labelled 'disrupted by untimely floods' to show how climate stress degrades the system and why formal integration is urgent

Kosi basin indigenous flood knowledge vs formal early warning

Revision card

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

In one breath

Kosi communities use saa-dhaul-garki river reading; the article reports a 200,000-cusec release without warning, below the usual 300,000-cusec alert threshold. Infrastructure constriction compounds risk. Sendai and national policy endorse indigenous knowledge; the article finds minimal integration.

Carry this into the hall

1. 200,000 cusecs released at 2 am; no alert issued because threshold is 300,000 cusecs — threshold design is a political choice.
2. River passage compressed from 9–10 km to 1.5–2 km by bridge infrastructure; state-built works manufacture flood intensity.
3. Saa-dhaul-garki categories encode colour, vortex and volume into community-level boat-safety decisions — a functional early warning system.
4. Kaans blossom and Dussehra mark flood season end; untimely flooding disrupts both signals, degrading indigenous reliability.
5. Sendai and India's disaster policy encourage local-knowledge integration; the case highlights an implementation gap requiring closer field verification.

Numbers worth quoting

1.81 billion	people globally facing flood risk
70 per cent	of flood-risk population in South and East Asia
9–10 km to 1.5–2 km	river passage narrowed by bridge infrastructure

Scholars to cite

Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction	indigenous knowledge inclusion	non-binding global framework supporting local knowledge; the case illustrates a possible implementation gap
ICIMOD (Hindu Kush Himalayan framework)	transboundary flood governance	argues multi-country data sharing is precondition for early warning across HKH river systems
Applied anthropology tradition	co-designed early warning	participatory system design with indigenous knowledge holders as the methodological corrective anthropology offers

Concepts to use

saa-dhaul-garki classification · threshold-based alert failure · hydraulic constriction · manufactured flood vulnerability · indigenous ecological knowledge · transboundary data gap · knowledge-governance mismatch

Case to mention

Musahar community, Kosi basin, Bihar	evidence that indigenous river-reading systems are operationally excluded from formal disaster governance

Practice

- What does the marginalisation of indigenous flood-prediction systems in the Kosi basin reveal about the limits of technocratic disaster governance? Suggest an anthropological approach to remedy this. (10 marks)
- Critically examine the role of anthropology in bridging indigenous ecological knowledge and formal early warning systems in tribal and rural development contexts, with reference to riverine communities. (20 marks)

Food as social fact: nutrition's cultural and structural determinants

Source: Anthro Bulletin, Volume 7, Issue 9, September 2026 (Anthropos India Foundation / Anthropos Books, New Delhi) · Beyond Nutrients: Understanding Food, Culture and the Social Determinants of Nutrition
Paper I · 9.8 — supplements the epidemiological anthropology chapter

Summary

Nutrition is a biological phenomenon shaped by social and cultural conditions. Food classifications and meal structures are culturally organised — they encode social boundaries, religious practice, regional identity and family tradition. Claude Lévi-Strauss showed that cooking is a universal transformation of nature into culture; Mary Douglas demonstrated that dietary rules mark social membership; Sidney Mintz traced how sugar's shift from aristocratic luxury to plantation-economy staple shows that taste itself is historically produced. These frameworks explain why nutritional awareness alone cannot ensure adequate diets. The social determinants of nutrition — income, education, gender relations and public policy — shape access alongside nutritional knowledge. Amartya Sen's entitlement theory argues that hunger can result from failures of access even without aggregate food shortage. NFHS-5 data illustrate the depth of India's challenge: 35.5% of children under five are stunted, 57% of women aged 15–49 are anaemic, and 67% of children aged 6–59 months are anaemic. A double burden of malnutrition operates where persistent micronutrient deficiency coexists with rising overweight, driven by cheap energy-dense foods. Traditional food practices offer partial remedies: ragi is calcium-rich; cereal-pulse combinations improve protein quality through complementary amino acid profiles; fermentation of idli-dosa batters can reduce phytates and improve mineral availability. Gendered feeding hierarchies, including women eating last, may leave pregnancy and lactation needs unmet.

Where can I use this?

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

This unit centres on tribal health and nutrition as persistent structural problems. Sen's entitlement failure and the NFHS-5 stunting and anaemia data, combined with the analysis of gendered feeding hierarchies, supply the causal framework a candidate needs to explain why tribal undernutrition is a problem of access and social structure, not food availability alone.

Paper I · 12 Applications of Anthropology

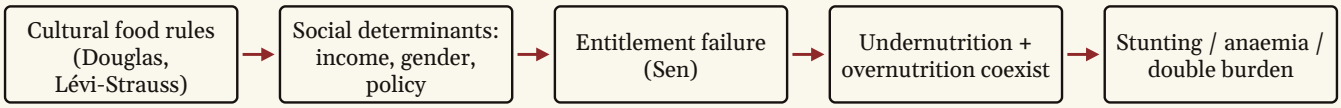
Nutritional anthropology is an explicitly listed application under Paper I unit 12. The analysis of traditional food knowledge — ragi's calcium density, cereal-pulse protein complementarity, fermentation reducing phytates — and the policy architecture of POSHAN Abhiyaan and Anganwadis are precisely the applied content this unit expects.

What's in it for your Mains Exam

Double burden and its structural drivers

Indicator	NFHS-5 figure
Children under 5 stunted	35.5%
Women 15–49 anaemic	57%
Children 6–59 months anaemic	67%

From cultural classification to nutritional outcome: a causal chain



Draw this five-box chain to show examiners that undernutrition is structurally produced, not biologically inevitable — the core epidemiological anthropology argument.

Food as social fact: nutrition's cultural and structural determinants

Revision card

Paper I · 9.8 — supplements the epidemiological anthropology chapter

In one breath

Food choices are culturally structured and socially determined, not merely biological. India's NFHS-5 data reveal stunting at 35.5% and female anaemia at 57%, alongside a double burden of under- and overnutrition. Traditional practices like fermentation and cereal-pulse pairing carry nutritional rationale.

Carry this into the hall

1. Douglas: food rules mark social boundaries, so diet change requires attention to social conditions, not awareness alone.
2. Mintz: sugar's rise shows taste is politically produced through colonial economy — nutrition is historical.
3. Sen's entitlement approach: hunger can persist despite adequate food supply when people lack access.
4. Double burden: cheap energy-dense foods raise overweight while micronutrient deficiency persists — one household, two problems.
5. Fermentation and cereal-pulse pairing are evidence that traditional food knowledge carries nutritional logic.

Numbers worth quoting

35.5%	children under 5 stunted, NFHS-5
57%	women 15–49 anaemic, NFHS-5
67%	children 6–59 months anaemic, NFHS-5

Scholars to cite

Mary Douglas	food as boundary	dietary rules encode social membership; a population's diet reflects its structure, not just its biology
Sidney Mintz	taste as history	food preferences are historically produced through political economy, not individual choice or culture alone
Amartya Sen	entitlement failure	hunger can follow failures of access and distribution, even without aggregate food shortage; adequate supply does not ensure access

Concepts to use

double burden of malnutrition · entitlement failure · phytate reduction · complementary amino acid profiles · gendered feeding hierarchy · ritual embeddedness of food · energy-dense nutrient-poor foods

Case to mention

NFHS-5 India 2019–21 stunting and anaemia data	evidence of nutritional deficits requiring biological and social analysis in India's crisis

Practice

- Social and cultural factors are more powerful determinants of nutritional outcomes than biological ones. Examine with reference to Indian data. (10 marks)
- What is the double burden of malnutrition? Using anthropological frameworks and Indian evidence, explain how cultural practices and entitlement failures together produce it. (20 marks)

Ethnic consolidation and middle-class politics in Assam

Source: Economic & Political Weekly, Vol LXI No 39, September 26, 2026 · Middle-class Politics in Assam — review of Apurba Kumar Baruah, Social Tensions in Assam: Middle Class Politics, Purbanchal Prakash, 2025 [1991]

Paper II · 7.3 — supplements the ethnicity and ethnic conflict chapter

Summary

Apurba Kumar Baruah argues that ethnic and communal tensions in Assam are structurally produced, not primordial. An Assamese middle class — rooted in British-period Mauzadar revenue officials and Sattras — deployed linguistic nationalism as an instrument of competition against a dominant Bengali elite that controlled commerce, employment and even the medium of instruction after Assam was absorbed into Bengal province. Anandaram Dhekial Phukan first crystallised language as the axis of Assamese national consciousness; Ambikagiri Raichoudhury extended it into a territorial homeland demand. Baruah applies Gramsci's concept of hegemony to show that early student mobilisation around 1885 reflected middle-class interests rather than an anti-imperialist stance. Crucially, this mechanism has since been replicated at a lower register: Bodos and Misings have formed their own literary-cultural bodies — the Bodo Sahitya Sabha and the Mising Kebang — to resist Assamese linguistic hegemony, just as Assamese elites once resisted Bengali dominance. Tea-garden labourers and Nepalis, having assimilated linguistically, escaped communal targeting; Bengali-speaking Muslims did not, because their numerical and cultural viability made them antithetical to Assamese nationality. The reviewer extends this class-based analysis of the 1980s agitation to the 2019 anti-CAA protests. A counter-tension Baruah does not fully resolve is the independent role of Hindu-nationalist ideology in selectively activating ethnic categories through state power.

Where can I use this?

Paper II · 9.3 Contributions of anthropology to the understanding of regionalism, communalism and ethnic and political...

Unit 9.3 asks anthropology to illuminate regionalism, communalism and ethnic-political movements. Baruah's structural account of the Assam Movement, the Asom Gana Parishad's 1985 rise, and the anti-CAA agitation gives anthropology a precise explanatory role: tracing how emergent educated elites within each community convert economic competition into ethno-regional mobilisation.

Paper II · 5.2 Linguistic and religious minorities and their social, political and economic status.

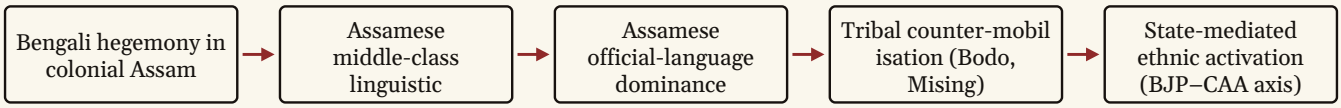
Unit 5.2 covers linguistic and religious minorities and their social, political and economic status. Bengali-speaking Muslims in Assam are the paradigm case here: their cultural and numerical viability denied them the assimilation route open to Nepalis and tea-garden workers, making them the primary target of Assamese linguistic nationalism as a minority-exclusion mechanism.

What's in it for your Mains Exam

The replication mechanism: how each tier mirrors the tier above

Dominated group	Hegemonic target
Assamese middle class (19th c.)	Bengali commercial-educational elite
Bengali-speaking Muslims	Assamese linguistic state
Bodos	Assamese official-language hegemony
Misings	Assamese educational dominance
Koch-Rajbongshi (2025)	Assamese and Indian state

From colonial language rivalry to postcolonial ethnic cascade



Draw five boxes linked by arrows to show each dominated tier replicating the mobilisation of the tier below it; label the final arrow 'state selectively activates' to flag Baruah's unresolved tension with Hindu-nationalist ideology

Ethnic consolidation and middle-class politics in Assam

Revision card

Paper II · 7.3 — supplements the ethnicity and ethnic conflict chapter

In one breath

Baruah shows Assam's ethnic tensions are middle-class competition dressed in linguistic nationalism, not primordial conflict. Each dominated group replicates the same mobilisation against the group above it. Gramsci's hegemony illuminates class interests in student politics; early bodies were not anti-imperialist.

Carry this into the hall

1. Ethnic tension is structurally produced by middle-class competition, not by primordial difference.
2. Bengali commercial dominance in colonial Assam forced an Assamese elite to weaponise language as nationality.
3. Each subordinate group — Bodo, Mising, Koch-Rajbongshi — replicates the same mobilisation one level down.
4. Gramsci's hegemony links early Assamese student bodies to middle-class interests, not anti-imperialism.
5. Numerical-cultural viability, not origin, determines who becomes the communal 'other' in ethnic competition.

Scholars to cite

Apurba Kumar Baruah	structural ethnicity	ethnic conflict in Assam is middle-class economic competition articulated through linguistic nationalism, not primordial sentiment
Antonio Gramsci	hegemony	student movements in Assam reproduced dominant-class interests, making ethnic agitation a vehicle of hegemonic consensus
Hans Kohn / Karl Deutsch	linguistic nationalism	language becomes the boundary-marker of nationality where an indigenous bourgeoisie is absent and cultural competition is acute

Concepts to use

structural ethnicity · linguistic nationalism · ethnic replication · hegemonic student movement · numerical-cultural viability · assimilationist escape · emergent educated elite

Case to mention

Bodo Sahitya Sabha and Mising Kebang, Assam	evidence that dominated groups replicate majority linguistic-nationalist mobilisation against the group above them

Practice

- Ethnic conflicts in India are expressions of middle-class competition rather than primordial cultural differences. Discuss with reference to any one regional case. (10 marks)
- Examine the concept of ethnicity in the context of nationality formation in Northeast India, bringing out the role of linguistic nationalism, class interests and tribal counter-mobilisation. (20 marks)

Koch-Rajbongshi, Tai-Ahom and nationality formation in Assam

Source: Economic & Political Weekly, Vol LXI No 39, September 26, 2026 · Review of Apurba Kumar Baruah, Social Tensions in Assam: Middle Class Politics (2025 [1991])

Paper II · 7.3, 9.3 — supplements the ethnicity and ethnic conflict chapter

Summary

Ethnic mobilisation in Assam is not reducible to primordial identity assertion. The Koch-Rajbongshi agitation — demanding Scheduled Tribes status and a separate state called Kamatapur, which attracted a police crackdown in September 2025 — belongs to a pattern shared by Tai-Ahom, Chutia, Matak, Moran and Tea Tribes communities pressing analogous claims over an extended period. Apurba Kumar Baruah's analytical framework, drawing on scholarship by Amalendu Guha, Gail Omvedt, Hiren Gohain and Tilottama Mishra, explains these episodes as products of class formation: educated elites and a job-seeking middle class within each community drive ethno-consolidation because recognition unlocks reservations, employment and political representation. Baruah's concept of nationality formation holds that student movements protecting linguistic and cultural identity have been the cornerstone of post-independence political mobilisation in Assam, bridging colonial-era grievance and contemporary ethnic unrest. The framework was first constructed to explain the 1980s anti-foreigner agitation and the reviewer extends its relevance to anti-CAA protests in Assam. The reviewer argues that subsequent generations should revisit the complexity of the middle-class dimension noted in earlier accounts.

Where can I use this?

Paper II · 9.3 Contributions of anthropology to the understanding of regionalism, communalism and ethnic and political...

Unit 9.3 asks how anthropology explains regionalism, communalism and ethnic political movements. Baruah's nationality-formation framework is the analytical contribution: it shows that linguistic-identity student movements generate regional ethnic coalitions. Write that anthropology reveals the class base beneath cultural claims, converting regionalist unrest into a structurally explicable political process.

Paper II · 7.2 Social change and contemporary tribal societies

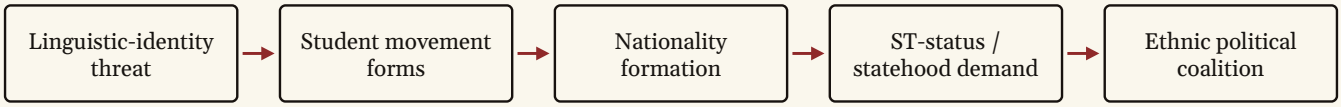
Unit 7.2 addresses the impact of modern democratic institutions and development programmes on tribal communities. ST-status demands by Koch-Rajbongshi and Tai-Ahom are responses to how constitutional reservation structures shape political incentives, showing that democratic institutions reshape tribal identity politics rather than simply delivering welfare.

What's in it for your Mains Exam

Class formation as the engine of ethnic demand in Assam

Standard culturalist accounts treat ethnic unrest as primordial sentiment re-surfacing. The Assam material inverts this: Koch-Rajbongshi, Tai-Ahom, Chutia, Matak, Moran and Tea Tribes demands for ST recognition and, for Koch-Rajbongshi, Kamatapur statehood are structurally legible as competition for reservations and public employment. An educated middle class within each community leads mobilisation because ST recognition opens access to reservation benefits. Write that ethnicity here is a mechanism of class aspiration, not its opposite — the cultural idiom is instrumentalised, not merely expressed.

Nationality formation: from student movement to ethnic political coalition



Draw this five-stage chain to show how Baruah converts a cultural grievance into a structural political outcome — the examiner rewards the causal logic, not just the list of communities.

Koch-Rajbongshi, Tai-Ahom and nationality formation in Assam

Revision card

Paper II · 7.3, 9.3 — supplements the ethnicity and ethnic conflict chapter

In one breath

Ethno-consolidation among Koch-Rajbongshi, Tai-Ahom and allied Assam communities is driven by educated-elite class aspirations, not primordial sentiment. Baruah's nationality-formation framework links student movements over linguistic identity to demands for ST status and statehood. Class formation, not culture alone, explains ethnic unrest.

Carry this into the hall

1. Koch-Rajbongshi demand Kamatapur statehood and ST status — crackdown September 2025.
2. Tai-Ahom, Chutia, Matak, Moran and Tea Tribes press parallel recognition demands over extended period.
3. Baruah: nationality formation begins with student movements defending linguistic identity, then scales to ethnic coalitions.
4. Class formation drives ethnicity — educated elites seek reservations, not only cultural survival.
5. The reviewer extends the framework from the 1980s agitation to anti-CAA protests: possible structural continuity.

Scholars to cite

Apurba Kumar Baruah	nationality formation	student movements over linguistic identity become the engine of ethnic and regional political mobilisation in Assam
Amalendu Guha	Assamese nationality	colonial-era grievance structures persist into post-independence ethnic assertions, linking historical and contemporary unrest
class-formation framework	elite-driven ethnicity	educated middle class converts cultural identity into political demand for reservations and statehood

Concepts to use

nationality formation · ethno-consolidation · elite-driven mobilisation · recognition politics · pseudo-tribalism · linguistic identity movement · class-ethnicity nexus

Case to mention

Koch-Rajbongshi Kamatapur agitation, Assam, 2025	evidence that ST-status demand is class-driven nationality formation, not primordialism

Practice

- Ethnic identity assertions in Northeast India are best understood as expressions of class aspiration rather than primordial sentiment. Discuss with reference to any two communities. (10 marks)
- Examine the concept of nationality formation and assess its utility in explaining ethnic conflicts and demands for autonomy among tribal communities in Assam. (20 marks)

Agricultural Land Diversion by Infrastructure and Livelihood Loss

Source: Economic & Political Weekly, Vol LXI No 40, October 3, 2026 · Infrastructure Expansion and the Crisis of Agricultural Land Governance in India

Paper II · 6.3, 7.1, 9.2 — supplements the developmental displacement and rehabilitation chapter

Summary

India's post-2015 greenfield infrastructure surge — expressways, high-speed rail, defence corridors, industrial nodes, solar parks — is converting agricultural land at accelerating pace with no consolidated national accounting of cumulative scale. The structural problem is fragmentation: NHAI, state industrial development corporations, energy agencies, and revenue administrations each evaluate only their own project-level Environmental Impact Assessments. No single cross-sector authority consistently assesses cumulative corridor or landscape impacts, while precautionary environmental principles strengthen the case for cumulative appraisal. State-level data reveal the quantum: EPW estimates 15,000 hectares for Ganga Expressway; UPEIDA's April 2022 road-alignment figure was 7,430 hectares (scopes not reconciled); the Defence Industrial Corridor acquired about 2,015 hectares, compensating roughly 5,800 farmers; Maharashtra's Shaktipeeth Expressway spans some 7,500 hectares amid active farmer protests; the Bengaluru–Chennai Expressway affected over 6,000 households. Nationally, NHAI spent approximately 1.7 lakh crore on land acquisition over five years, roughly 20 percent of total project costs. The 2013 land-acquisition Act contains food-security safeguards and notified limits, but exempts linear projects such as highways from Section 10. Cash compensation alone may fail to restore livelihoods; Narmada litigation emphasises applicable rehabilitation obligations: agricultural land is a livelihood system embedded in occupational identity, social networks, and intergenerational knowledge, not a tradeable asset. The author calls for cumulative corridor-level assessment, annual national diversion inventories, state-level agricultural land protection zones, and legally enforceable rehabilitation frameworks.

Where can I use this?

Paper II · 7.1 Problems of exploitation and deprivation of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes

Unit 7.1 centres on exploitation and deprivation of SCs, STs and OBCs, including constitutional safeguards. Infrastructure land acquisition falls disproportionately on smallholders from these categories. Write that fragmented acquisition governance systematically bypasses constitutional rehabilitation obligations, deepening structured deprivation.

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

Unit 9.2 asks what anthropology contributes to tribal and rural development. Applied anthropology's role here is designing enforceable livelihood-transition frameworks by documenting how land encodes occupational identity and intergenerational knowledge — the evidence base no engineering EIA captures.

What's in it for your Mains Exam

Why compensation fails: land as livelihood system, not asset

Narmada litigation underlines rehabilitation duties under applicable law and policy; cash alone may not restore livelihoods. Agricultural land is not an interchangeable economic unit: it carries occupational identity, caste-linked tenure memory, intergenerational agrarian knowledge, and social network density. When infrastructure acquisition strips this, a cash payment transfers legal title but leaves displaced households without the skill set, social capital, or institutional access needed to reconstitute livelihoods. Intensification — multiple cropping, mechanisation, groundwater extraction — has expanded output on the remaining base but cannot substitute for territorial contraction when entire household economies are severed from the land system.

Governance architecture of fragmented land diversion



Draw as a five-box chain; label the gap between boxes 2 and 3 'governance lacuna'. Illustrates an argument that impoverishment can be structurally produced — the argument examiners reward.

Agricultural Land Diversion by Infrastructure and Livelihood Loss

Revision card

Paper II · 6.3, 7.1, 9.2 — supplements the developmental displacement and rehabilitation chapter

In one breath

Greenfield infrastructure converts farmland with no cumulative national accounting. NHAI spent roughly 1.7 lakh crore on acquisition in five years. Cash alone may not restore livelihoods: land also carries identity and intergenerational knowledge.

Carry this into the hall

1. No national agricultural land diversion inventory exists post-2015 — scale is structurally invisible.
2. NHAI land acquisition cost 1.7 lakh crore over five years, 20 percent of project outlay.
3. UP Defence Industrial Corridor compensated roughly 5,800 farmers; Shaktipeeth Expressway spans 7,500 hectares.
4. Section 10 safeguards agricultural land, but exempts linear projects such as highways.
5. Cernea's impoverishment risks plus Article 21 rehabilitation standard together frame the legal-anthropological critique.

Numbers worth quoting

1.7 lakh crore	NHAI land acquisition spend, five years
~15,000 hectares	Ganga: EPW estimate; 2022 UPEIDA alignment ~7,430 ha; scopes unclear
~7,500 hectares	Shaktipeeth Expressway footprint, Maharashtra

Scholars to cite

Narmada Bachao Andolan v Union of India 2000	Article 21 rehabilitation	Rehabilitation obligations depend on applicable law, policy and the circumstances of displacement.
Cumulative Environmental Assessment doctrine	anticipatory governance	Precautionary principles support arguments for broader appraisal beyond individual project boundaries.
Michael Cernea	impoverishment risks model	Landlessness and joblessness as primary displacement risks apply directly to infrastructure-displaced smallholders.

Concepts to use

cumulative environmental assessment · agricultural land protection zone · greenfield diversion · livelihood embeddedness · sectoral governance fragmentation · intensification substitution · Article 21 rehabilitation

Case to mention

Bengaluru–Chennai Expressway, 6,000-plus affected households	Evidence that greenfield corridors displace livelihoods at scale without cumulative appraisal.

Practice

- Compensation is not rehabilitation. Discuss with reference to infrastructure-led agricultural land acquisition in India. (10 marks)
- Critically examine the governance deficit in India's infrastructure land acquisition regime and its consequences for rural livelihood displacement. What role can anthropology play in designing effective rehabilitation frameworks? (20 marks)

Read for this issue

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

Down To Earth, 1-15 October 2026	25 Oct 2026
Anthro Bulletin, Volume 7, Issue 9, September 2026 (Anthropos India Foundation / Anthropos Books, New Delhi)	25 Oct 2026
Economic & Political Weekly, Vol LXI No 39, September 26, 2026	25 Oct 2026
New Scientist, Vol 272 No 3616, 10 October 2026	25 Oct 2026
Economic & Political Weekly, Vol LXI No 40, October 3, 2026	25 Oct 2026
Economic & Political Weekly, Vol LXI No 41, October 10, 2026	25 Oct 2026

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