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Q3(c)

Describe the paleoanthropological fossil finds from Siwalik hills. Examine the contribution of Siwalik fossils to paleoanthropological knowledge

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2015 · Anthropology GS 2 · 15 marks · Evolution of the Indian Culture and Civilization

1.1 Evolution of the Indian Culture and Civilization-Prehistoric (Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic and Neolithic-Chalcolithic), Protohistoric (Indus Civilization). Pre-Harappan, Harappan and post-Harappan cultures. Contributions of the tribal cultures to Indian civilization.

Core demand of the question

- Describe the paleoanthropological fossil finds from Siwalik hills. Examine the contribution of Siwalik fossils to paleoanthropological knowledge
- Keep the answer to a 15-mark length of about 200 words

Revision summary

Siwalik hills yield Miocene apes, notably **Sivapithecus** and **Gigantopithecus**.

Ramapithecus was once misread as a human ancestor.

The record shows an Asian ape radiation and forced a rethink of phylogeny.

Hominin bone is rare; tools and fauna still mark later human presence.

Siwalik stratigraphy remains a South Asian palaeontological backbone.

Introduction

The Siwalik hills hold a long Miocene-to-Pleistocene fossil record of apes, other mammals, and rare later hominin-related finds. They taught Asia as a primate stage, not only Africa.

Body

Main finds

- **Sivapithecus** (once lumped as **Ramapithecus** in part) from Siwalik beds is an orangutan-clade ape, known from jaws and face fragments.
- **Gigantopithecus** remains in the same province show a giant Asian ape alongside the smaller sivapithecines.
- Older collections under **Barnum Brown**, Indian Survey teams, and later **Pilbeam** and Indian palaeontologists built the chronology of the **Siwalik Group**.
- Stone tools and later Pleistocene fauna sit in the same foothill belt, tying the hills to early human presence even when hominin bone is scarce.

Contribution to knowledge

- Mid-twentieth-century claims that **Ramapithecus** was a direct human ancestor collapsed. Siwalik apes recalibrated the human-ape split toward Africa for later hominins.

- **The contribution is therefore double:** a rich Asian ape radiation, and a caution against reading every thick-enamel jaw as Homo.
- Siwalik stratigraphy still dates mammalian evolution in South Asia and frames where Acheulian makers could walk.

Flow diagram

Siwalik beds -> Sivapithecus
Siwalik beds -> Gigantopithecus
Sivapithecus -> Not a human ancestor

Conclusion

Siwalik fossils contribute a dated Asian ape record, especially **Sivapithecus**. They corrected an ancestor story and still anchor South Asian palaeontology.

Facts & figures

Sivapithecus

Siwalik Miocene ape now linked to the orangutan clade, not to Homo.

Ramapithecus

Older name for jaws once claimed as hominin; largely merged into Sivapithecus.

Gigantopithecus

Giant Asian ape represented in the Siwalik fossil province.

Siwalik Group

Foothill sediments that date a long mammalian sequence in North India and Pakistan.

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