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Q2(b)

What are the arguments for excluding Narmada Man from Homo erectus category?

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2022 · Anthropology GS 2 · 15 marks · Palaeo-Anthropological evidences from India with special reference to Siwaliks and Narmada basin (Ramapithecus, Sivapithecus and Narmada Man).

1.2 Palaeo-Anthropological evidences from India with special reference to Siwaliks and Narmada basin (Ramapithecus, Sivapithecus and Narmada Man).

Core demand of the question

- What are the arguments for excluding Narmada Man from Homo erectus category?
- Keep the answer to a 15-mark length of about 200 words

Revision summary

Narmada Man is the **Hathnora** skullcap found by Sonakia in 1982.

It was first compared with Asian Homo erectus.

Higher **cranial capacity** and a more arched vault argue against that label.

The fossil is incomplete and the Narmada gravels are hard to date.

Many workers now treat it as archaic Homo sapiens or heidelbergensis grade.

Introduction

Narmada Man is the **Hathnora** calvarium found in the Narmada alluvium in 1982. It was first placed near Homo erectus, and later workers argued that the skull does not fit that box.

Body

The find

- **Arun Sonakia** recovered the fossil at **Hathnora** on the Narmada. It is a partial skullcap, not a face, jaw, or limb set.
- Early comparison with **Java** and **Zhoukoudian** erectus stressed a thick vault and a strong brow.

Arguments for exclusion

- **Cranial capacity** estimates sit higher than typical Asian Homo erectus and nearer some archaic Homo sapiens or **Homo heidelbergensis** readings.
- The vault is more arched, the parietal is broader, and some metrics sit with later Middle Pleistocene humans, not with classic erectus.
- The specimen is incomplete. Without face, teeth, and postcrania, erectus is a risky default.
- Stratigraphy of the Narmada gravels is reworked. Date and associated fauna do not lock the skull to an erectus time-slice.

- Indian palaeoanthropology after **M. L. K. Murty** and later reviewers therefore prefers archaic Homo sapiens, Homo heidelbergensis, or an open Middle Pleistocene grade.

Caution

- Exclusion is a metric and completeness argument. It is not a new complete skeleton. A single calvarium cannot carry a species war by itself.

Flow diagram

Hathnora calvarium -> Early erectus label
Hathnora calvarium -> Higher capacity arched vault
Higher capacity arched vault -> Archaic sapiens or heidelbergensis

Conclusion

Narmada Man is excluded from Homo erectus mainly because of higher capacity, a more arched vault, a poor date, and missing bones. The safer label is a Middle Pleistocene archaic human until more fossils appear.

Facts & figures

Hathnora

Narmada locality in Madhya Pradesh that yielded the calvarium called Narmada Man.

Arun Sonakia

Geological Survey palaeontologist who reported the 1982 find.

Cranial capacity

Estimates higher than many Asian erectus means, used to shift the specimen toward archaic sapiens.

Reworked gravels

Narmada alluvium that mixes fauna and artefacts, weakening a tight erectus date.

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