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Q5(b)

Ramapithecus-Sivapithecus debate

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2023 · Anthropology GS 2 · 10 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

- Write a note on the Ramapithecus-Sivapithecus debate
- State the old hominin claim and the facial revision
- Name localities and scholars
- Keep the note within a 10-mark length

Revision summary

Lewis named Ramapithecus from Siwalik jaws and it was treated as a Miocene hominin.

Pilbeam and later face finds showed an orang-like profile.

Ramapithecus is now included in Sivapithecus.

Haritalyangar and Potwar are key localities.

The debate does not support an Indian origin of Homo.

Introduction

Ramapithecus was once presented as a mid-Miocene hominin ancestor with small canines. Sivapithecus is a Siwalik ape whose face matches the orangutan line. The debate ended by folding Ramapithecus into Sivapithecus. It is a lesson in how jaws without faces mislead phylogeny.

Body**The old claim**

- **G. E. Lewis** named Ramapithecus from Siwalik jaws. Small canines and a supposedly arched palate were read as hominin.
- Popular and some textbook accounts in the 1960s-70s placed a 12-14 million-year-old "first man" in India.

The revision

- Better faces from **Potwar** (Pakistan) and **Haritalyangar** (Himachal), studied by **David Pilbeam** and others, showed a dishd, orang-like profile.
- Ramapithecus specimens belong with **Sivapithecus**. They are pongine (orang-related) apes, not Australopithecus.

- **Elwyn Simons** and others had kept the hominin reading longer; anatomy of the complete face closed it.

Localities

- **Haritalyangar**, Chinji-Nagri Siwaliks, and Ramnagar (Jammu) are the Indian-Pakistan teaching sites.
- **Narmada Hathnora** is a Pleistocene calvarium and must not be mixed into this Miocene debate.

Significance

- The Siwaliks remain central for Asian hominoids. They do not prove an Indian origin of humans.

Flow diagram

Ramapithecus jaws -> Old hominin claim
Complete face -> Sivapithecus
Sivapithecus -> Orang line
Old hominin claim -> Claim rejected

Conclusion

Ramapithecus as a hominin is retired. The fossils are **Sivapithecus**, on the orangutan line. The debate shows why isolated teeth should not be sold as the first human.

Facts & figures

G. E. Lewis

Named Ramapithecus from Siwalik mandibular material that was later reassigned.

David Pilbeam

Showed that Ramapithecus faces align with Sivapithecus and the orangutan clade.

Haritalyangar

Himachal Siwalik locality for Sivapithecus and large hominoid jaws.

Sivapithecus

Miocene ape with a dished face close to Pongo, not to Australopithecus.

Hathnora caution

Narmada Pleistocene calvarium is a different time, place, and problem from the Ramapithecus debate.