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Q3(c)

Highlight the significant contributions of B. S. Guha, Irawati Karve and S. R. K. Chopra to Indian Anthropology

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2025 · Anthropology GS 2 · 15 marks · Emergence, growth and development of Anthropology in India

4. Emergence, growth and development of Anthropology in India-Contributions of the 18th, 19th and early 20th Century scholar-administrators. Contributions of Indian anthropologists to tribal and caste studies.

Core demand of the question

- State B. S. Guha's significant contributions
- State Irawati Karve's
- State S. R. K. Chopra's
- Show how the three together map race, kinship-civilisation and fossils in Indian anthropology

Revision summary

- **Guha:** 1931 racial types, ASI institution, Harappan osteology; typology is the limit.
- **Karve:** kinship organisation, Maharashtra, epics, north-south marriage contrast.
- **Chopra:** Siwalik Sivapithecus school at Chandigarh; Ramapithecus later revised.

Together they cover living measurement, civilisation-as-kinship, and Miocene fossils.

Keep their questions; update their boxes with genetics and ethnography.

Introduction

B. S. Guha, Irawati Karve and S. R. K. Chopra stand for three craft rooms of Indian anthropology: census anthropometry, kinship and **Maharashtra civilisation**, and Siwalik palaeoanthropology. Each left a method that is still taught, and each has a limit that is now clear.

Body

B. S. Guha

Guha led physical anthropology at the **Zoological Survey** and then the **Anthropological Survey of India**. For the **1931 Census** he offered a racial map of India (Nordic, Graeco-Scythian, Brachycephalic, Mundari, Mongoloid, Negrito traces, and related types in the textbook versions). He measured living people at a national scale and helped institutionalise ASI. He also wrote on the **Indus** physical type from Harappan skeletons available then.

The limit is typology. His census races, like Risley's, freeze clines into boxes. His institutional gift is larger than his racial list: a government science of the body that later turned toward **People of India** ethnography and genetics.

Irawati Karve

Karve, trained with **Eugen Fischer** in Germany and then firmly Indian in subject, mapped **kinship, caste and region**. **Kinship Organisation in India** contrasted **Indo-European north** (village exogamy, kanyadan hypergamy) with **Dravidian south** (cross-cousin marriage, different alliance). She wrote on **Maharashtra** as a cultural region, on the **Bhils**, on epics as social documents (Yuganta), and on the **anthropometry of caste** without reducing caste to nose.

She showed that **civilisation is kinship geography**. Feminists later used her epic readings. Geneticists now find that her north-south marriage contrast still roughly tracks difference in affinity structure. The limit: a strong regional contrast can hide Adivasi and Muslim kinship that are neither "northern Sanskritic" nor "Dravidian textbook".

S. R. K. Chopra

Chopra, at Panjab University, Chandigarh, made the **Indian Siwaliks** a world hominoid site. With colleagues he described **Sivapithecus** material, discussed **Ramapithecus**, and trained a school that linked geology to jaws. He placed India in **Miocene ape phylogeny** when many syllabi still jumped from Europe to Africa.

- **The limit is the same as the field's**: fragmentary faces, revised taxa, Ramapithecus retired as a hominin. Chopra's contribution is the **laboratory and the locality**, not a final family tree.

Together

Guha measured living types for the state. Karve measured marriage for civilisation. Chopra measured fossils for deep time. Indian anthropology's three clocks - census body, kinship region, Siwalik bed - meet in this trio.

Flow diagram

Guha -> Census body ASI
Karve -> Kinship north south
Chopra -> Siwalik apes

Conclusion

Guha built racial census science and ASI. Karve built kinship regions and a reading of caste and epic. Chopra built Siwalik hominoid palaeontology. Use their methods; do not freeze their first maps as eternal races or eternal ancestors.

Facts & figures

1931 Census

Guha's racial classification of Indian populations became the textbook physical-anthropology map for decades.

Kinship Organisation in India

Karve's comparative account of northern and southern kinship, still a starting text for alliance and village exogamy.

Chandigarh Siwalik school

Chopra's centre for hominoid palaeontology, especially Sivapithecus from the Indian Siwaliks.

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