

ANCIENT INDIANS



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THE AMAZING STORY OF OUR
~~EARLY EARLIER EARLIEST~~ ANCESTORS!

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 **Juggernaut**

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To
My wife, Sheba, and daughter, Khemta.

— TONY JOSEPH

*For Vallari Accava and Chengappa, who
always ask the best questions*

— DEVIKA CARIAPA





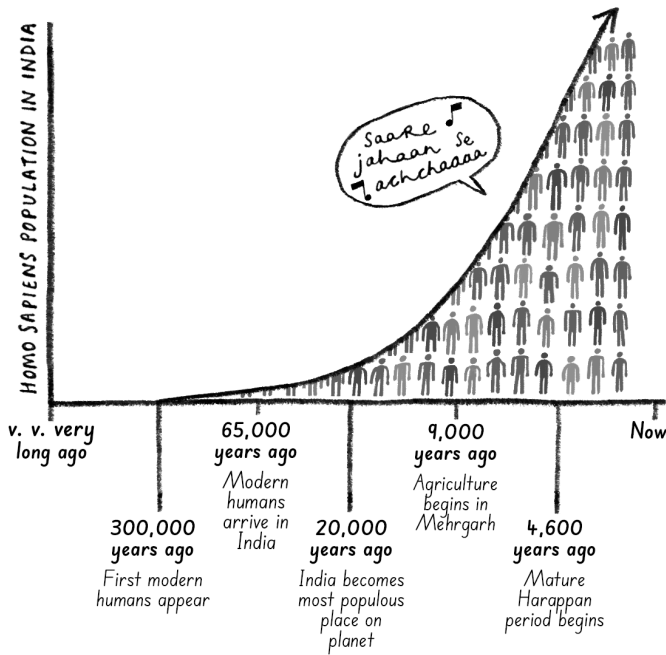
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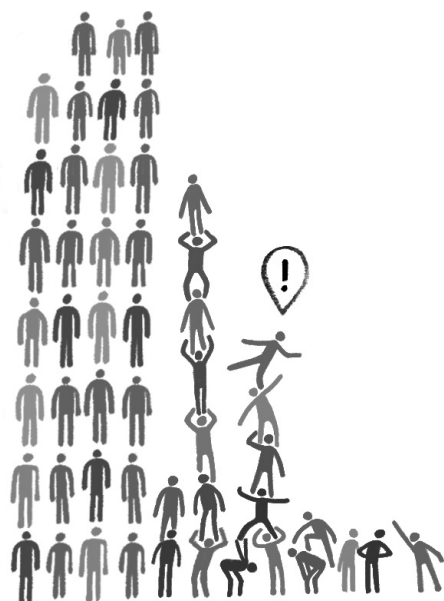
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A STRANGELY UNPEOPLED PLACE





A very long time ago, in what scientists call 'deep time', no one lived on the Indian subcontinent. There were plenty of living creatures, of course. But not a single human!

The subcontinent is a rather old place. It was born more than 50 million years ago, when a mega floating landmass collided with the continent of Eurasia. The impact was so huge that it crumpled the Earth, pushing it upwards into a chain of the highest mountains in the world and creating a small subcontinent out of the remaining plate of land.

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But here's the puzzling bit. For millions of years after that epic collision, you could have spent a lifetime wandering the place, searching through thick jungles and dark caves, scouring steep ravines and crossing gushing rivers, climbing snowy peaks and journeying across hot deserts. You may have had to fight off large numbers of ridiculously huge rodents,



avoid being fatally squeezed by a snake longer than a T. Rex, run into a colossal hornless rhino four times the size of an elephant, dodge giant meat-eating birds, and hide from a humungous sabre-toothed cat looking to make a snack out of you – and still not encountered a single other person!

Yet, here we are today, in the same land, with over a billion humans and counting.

Are you shaking your head and asking yourself, 'How did that happen?'

To tackle that question, we may have to put it a bit differently and ask:

Who are we Indians?

Have we always lived on the subcontinent?

If not, where did we come from? And when?

The answers lie way back in time. Not the time of your grandfather or even your great-great-grandmother, but to a period even before history began, known as prehistory, when writing had not been invented and no one left any records. It was

MEET OUR CRACK TEAM!

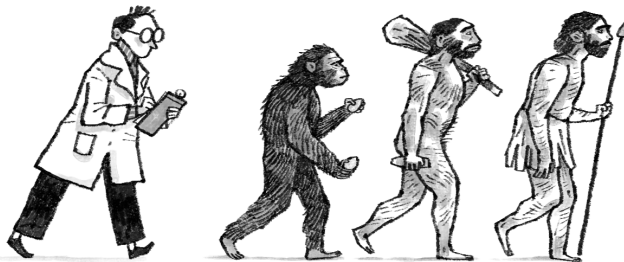


THE PALEONTOLOGIST:

studies fossils which are remains of very ancient living organisms such as animals and plants preserved in rock.

THE GENETICIST:

studies heredity, or how certain traits pass down from parent to child through genes, the coded information of features that each living being carries within their cells.



THE PALEOANTHROPOLOGIST:

studies the evolution of modern humans and their ancestors.

Ancient Indians

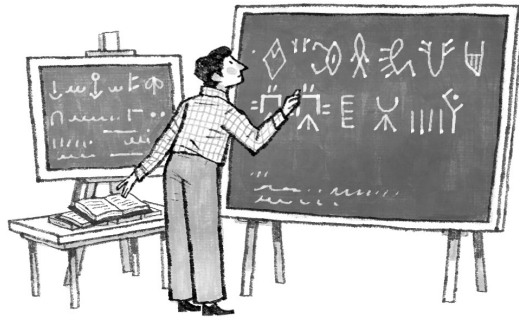


THE ARCHAEOLOGIST:

studies habitations of early humans and the materials left behind such as tools and buildings.

THE LINGUIST:

a scholar who studies languages and how they evolve over time.



THE HISTORIAN:

is trained to learn about the past through researching written and material remains.

so long ago that we cannot be sure of the events of those days or the names and stories of individual people and places.

Luckily for us, despite this absent information, we can still work out what life would have been like back then. This is due to the work of a range of brilliant scientists and scholars. These experts use different kinds of evidence to reconstruct what happened in the past.

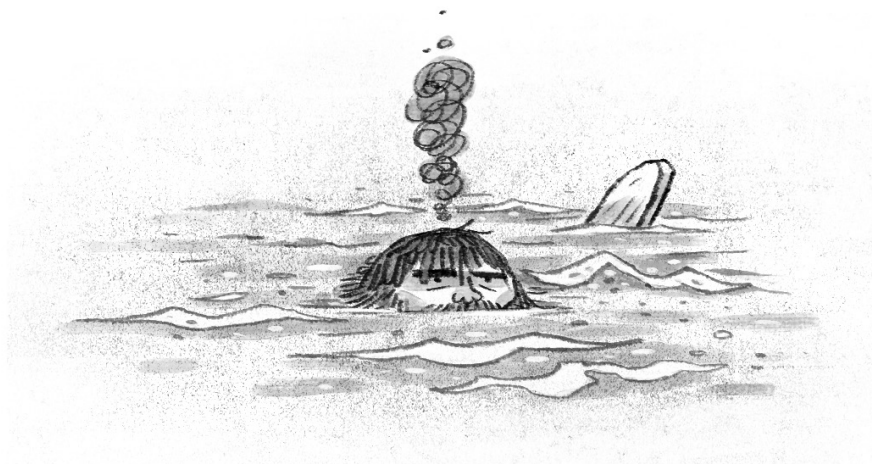
Together, the team can tell us about prehistoric times, what our early human ancestors might have looked like, the routes they travelled, where they settled and how they lived.

Listen to what they have to say about how we, the Indians, came to be and how we became the people of the once unpeopled Indian land!

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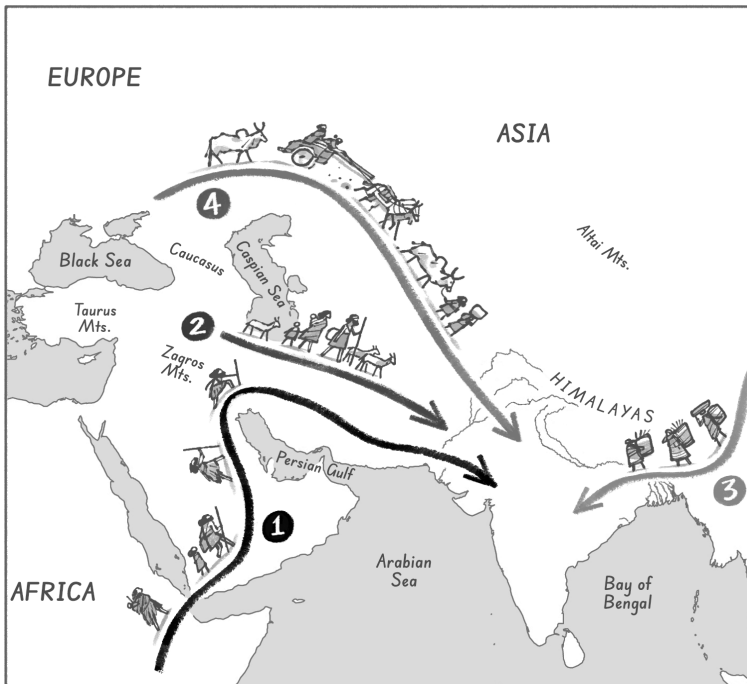
FILLING UP
THE SUBCONTINENT





According to our Crack Team, the population of the Indian subcontinent, including all of South Asia – modern-day India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Sri Lanka – was shaped by four major migrations that took place roughly between 65,000 and 3,500 years ago.

It all started with a wave of what scientists call *Homo sapiens* (*Homo* means ‘human’ and *sapiens* means ‘wise’) that came from the continent of Africa. *Homo sapiens* evolved in Africa more than 300,000 years ago. We will talk more about the



- ❶ Out of Africa migrants.
- ❷ Ancient Iranian migrants.
- ❸ Austro-asiatic language-speaking migrants from East Asia.
- ❹ Indo-European language-speaking migrants from the Central Asian Steppes

Homo group later. For now, it's back to our story of the migrations.

Around 70,000 years ago, bands of these *Homo sapiens* began moving out of Africa, spreading out both east and west. Some walked in the general direction of Europe. Others headed north and eventually ended up in China and Russia. Some groups made their way into the Indian subcontinent and found places to settle down around 65,000 years ago. And because they are the ancestors of all people of the subcontinent today, we call them the First Indians.

After a gap of about 55,000 years, groups of people from the region of present-day Iran began moving to northwestern Baluchistan, in what is now Pakistan. There, they mingled with descendants of the First Indians and began to conduct some of the world's first experiments in farming. Together, they formed a population that eventually became what we call the Harappans, the amazingly inventive

people who built the highly advanced cities of the Harappan Civilization.

The third major influx of people came into the subcontinent when the rapidly developing farming in China caused a population explosion there. Groups of people, possibly looking for more land, began to move southwards, eventually entering eastern India around 2000 BCE.

And the final big migration took place between 2000 and 1500 BCE when bands of horse-riding, cattle-herding warriors from the grassy plains of Central Asia, calling themselves the Arya, entered northern India.

The people who came in with these ancient movements made this land their own, mixing and mingling, and eventually turning a once uninhabited place into the home of the largest population of modern humans on Earth!

And if you're wondering how we came across all this information, come along on a ride with our



Tony Joseph with Devika Cariapa

Crack Team. Watch as they work like detectives, painstakingly finding and putting together evidence. Read on as they reveal layers of sensational scientific facts, fascinating information and maybe a few befuddling terms in order to put together the gripping story of how people came to occupy this vast subcontinent and how they became Indians.

But first, a few words from the geneticist!

What's the Delay?



In describing the movements of our ancient ancestors, we use modern-day geographical descriptions like Africa, Europe, India and Iran. In those far off days, none of these places existed as we know them today. Nations are a modern concept, and our ancestors would have been baffled by the very idea of boundaries as they moved freely over vast distances, basing their migrations on changing climate patterns and the range of flora and fauna available for their survival.

Today, if you want to travel to Africa from India, you would jump on a plane and be there in a day or two.