

UPSC CURRENTAFFAIRS NOTES 16-11-2023

Pradhan Mantri-Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PM-PVTG) Development Mission

The Prime Minister will launch the PM-PVTG Development Mission in a bid to empower the tribals on the birth anniversary of Birsa Munda, which has been celebrated as Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas.



Who are Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)?

PVTGs are a more vulnerable group among tribal groups in India.

These groups have primitive traits, geographical isolation, low literacy, zero to negative population growth rate and backwardness.

Moreover, they are largely dependent on hunting for food and a pre-agriculture level of technology.



In 1973, the Dhebar Commission set up a separate category for Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs). In 1975, the Centre identified 52 tribal groups as PTGs. In 1993, 23 more groups were added to the list. Later, in 2006, these groups were named PVTGs.

Currently, there are 2.8 million PVTGs belonging to 75 tribes across 22,544 villages in 220 districts across 18 states and Union Territories in India.

According to the 2011 Census, Odisha has the largest population of PVTGs at 866,000. It is followed by Madhya Pradesh at 609,000 and Andhra Pradesh (including Telangana) at 539,000.

The largest PVTG is Odisha's Saura community, numbering 535,000.

About PM-PVTG Development Mission:

The Rs 24,000-crore project is aimed at the development of the PVTGs.

It has been designed to bring critical infrastructure like power, water, road connectivity, housing, education, and healthcare to the PVTG communities living in remote villages.

Under the scheme, about 11 interventions like the PM-Gram Sadak Yojana, PM-Gram Awaas Yojana, Jal Jeevan Mission, and others will be taken to these target villages through the coordinated work of nine ministries.

In addition, saturation will be ensured for schemes such as the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojna, Sickle Cell Disease Elimination, TB Elimination, 100 percent immunisation, PM Surakshit Matritva Yojana, PM Matru Vandana Yojana, PM Poshan, and PM Jan Dhan Yojana.

Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF)

The Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF) recently signed an agreement to strengthen its supply chain and ensure adherence to labour rules.



About Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF):

It is a regional arrangement to build cooperation and economic integration in the Indo-Pacific region.

It was launched by United States President Joe Biden on May 23, 2022.

This framework is intended to advance resilience, sustainability, inclusiveness, economic growth, fairness, and competitiveness for member economies.

IPEF will seek to complement and build on existing regional architecture and support the global rules-based trading system.

It currently includes 14 partner countries: Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, the United States, and Vietnam.

The economic framework broadly rests on four pillars:

Trade

Supply chain resilience

Clean Energy, Decarbonization, and Infrastructure

Taxes and anti-corruption measures

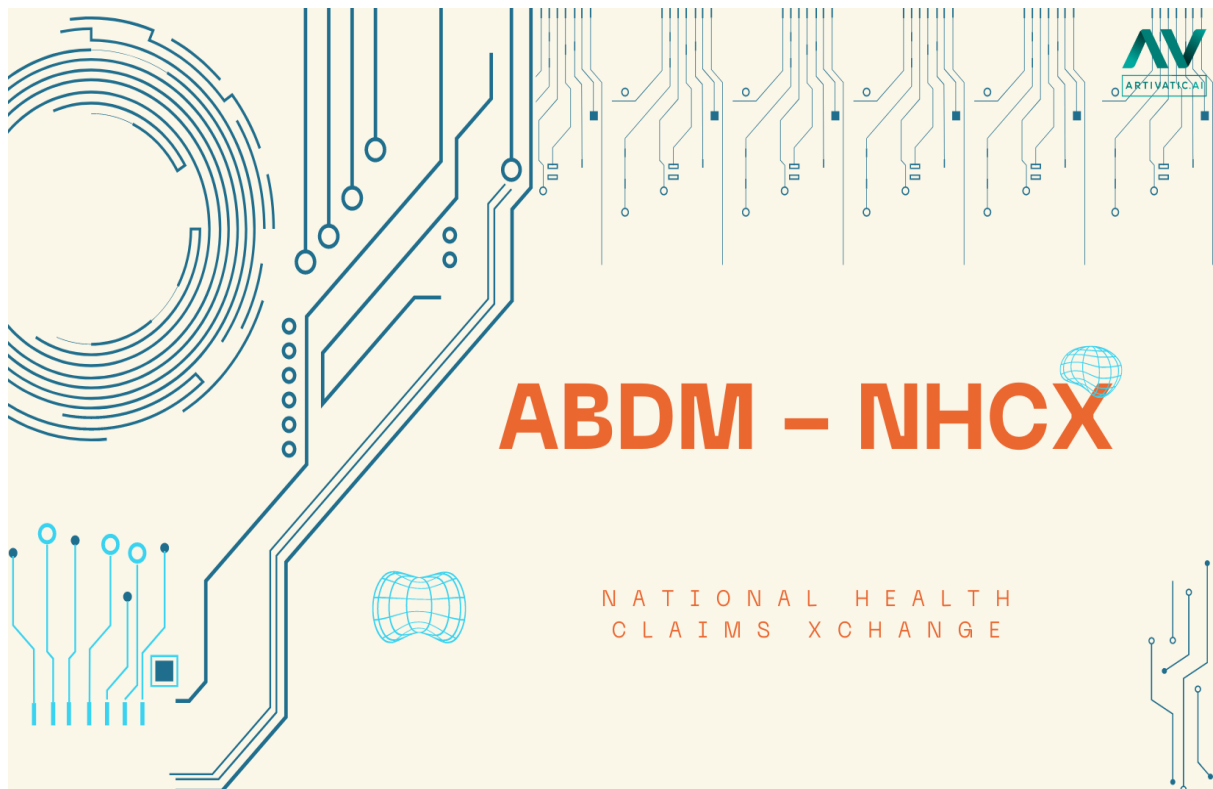
The IPEF is not a Free Trade Agreement (FTA), but it allows members to negotiate the parts they want to.

India and IPEF:

India has been actively participating in the IPEF, but not in all pillars.

India has decided to opt out of the trade pillar of the IPEF as most issues promoted by the IPEF do not align with India's trade policies.

National Health Claim Exchange (NHCX)



The National Health Authority (NHA) and the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) have joined hands to operationalize the National Health Claim Exchange (NHCX).

About National Health Claim Exchange (NHCX)

It is a digital health claims platform developed by the National Health Authority.



It will serve as a gateway for exchanging claims-related information among various stakeholders in the healthcare and health insurance ecosystem.

It is designed to be interoperable, machine-readable, auditable and verifiable, as well as help ensure the information exchanged is accurate and trustworthy.

Key points about the National Health Authority (NHA)

It is the apex body responsible for implementing Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY).

It has been entrusted with the role of designing strategy, building technological infrastructure and implementation of “National Digital Health Mission” to create a National Digital Health Eco-system.

It is the successor of the National Health Agency, which was functioning as a registered society. According to the Cabinet decision for full functional autonomy, the National Health Agency was reconstituted as the National Health Authority in January 2019.

It is an attached office of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare with full functional autonomy.

It is governed by a Governing Board chaired by the Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare.

It is headed by a Chief Executive Officer (CEO), an officer of the rank of Secretary to the Government of India, who manages its affairs.

The CEO is the Ex-Office Member Secretary of the Governing Board.

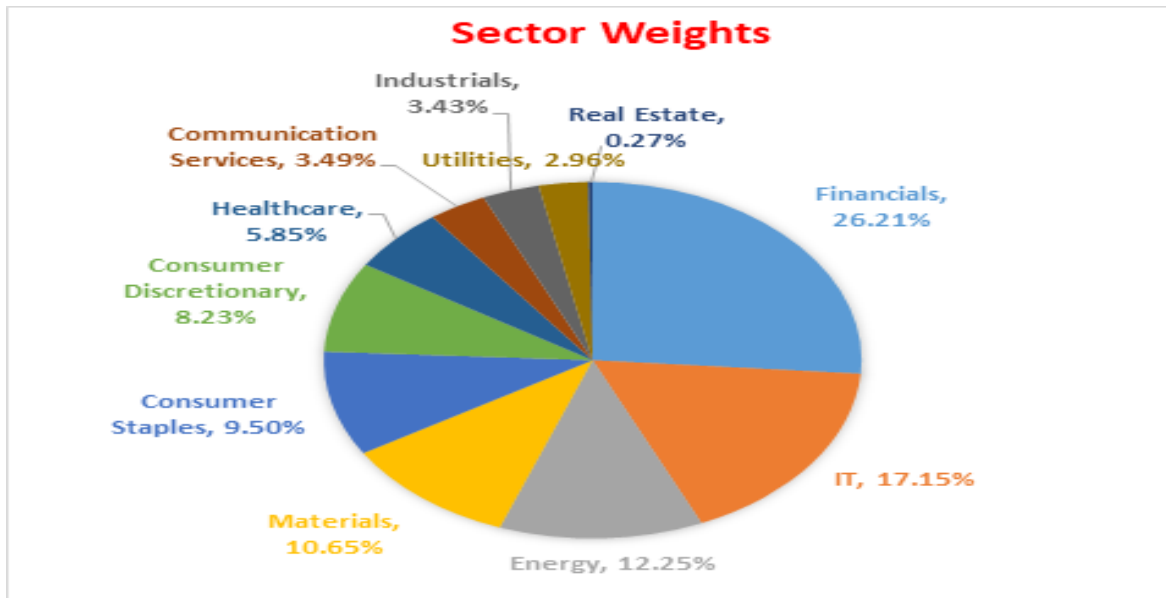
To implement the scheme at the State level, State Health Agencies (SHAs) in the form of a society/trust have been set up by respective States.

MSCI Index

In a significant development, global index provider MSCI has announced the inclusion of nine stocks in its MSCI Global Standard Index, effective as of the close of November 30, 2023.

About MSCI Index

It is owned by the multinational investment management and financial services company Morgan Stanley.



It is an investment research firm that provides stock indexes, portfolio risk and performance analytics, and governance tools to institutional investors and hedge funds.

It is a leading provider of critical decision support tools, including stock indexes, and services for the global investment community.

MSCI indices facilitate the construction and monitoring of portfolios in a cohesive and complete manner, avoiding benchmark misfits. It has over 160,000 indices in its portfolio.

MSCI has indexes for countries, regions, emerging markets, developed markets, small-cap, all cap and even Islamic indexes.

It selects stocks for its equity indexes that are easily traded and have high liquidity, with companies having high free float getting more weightage.

It prefers stocks that have active investor participation and are without owner restrictions.

Key facts about the MSCI India Index



It is designed to measure the performance of the large and mid-cap segments of the Indian market.

With 113 constituents, the index covers approximately 85% of the Indian equity universe.

The index is reviewed quarterly.

What is APEC & Why India is not a Member of the Grouping

The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) grouping is meeting in San Francisco in the United States.

About APEC (Objective, Members, Significance, etc.)

About Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC):

The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation is a regional economic forum and was formed in 1989.

Aim of the grouping

“leverage the growing interdependence of the Asia-Pacific and create greater prosperity for the people of the region through regional economic integration”.

The focus of APEC has been on trade and economic issues and hence, it terms the countries as “economies”.

It has been operating on the basis of non-binding commitments with decisions taken through commitments and consensus undertaken on a voluntary basis.

Member Countries:

Currently, APEC has 21 members.

The criterion for membership, however, is that each member must be an independent economic entity, rather than a sovereign state.

The grouping's current members are Australia, Brunei, Hong Kong, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Indonesia, China, Japan, South



Korea, Russia, Canada, the United States, Mexico, Peru, Chile, Malaysia, Vietnam, Singapore, Thailand and Taiwan.

Significance of APEC:

Since its formation, the grouping championed the lowering of trade tariffs, free trade, and economic liberalisation.

As per the US State Department, during its first five years of operation, APEC established its core objectives.

In the Seoul Declaration (1991), APEC member economies proclaimed the creation of a liberalised free trade area around the Pacific Rim as the principal objective of the organisation.

APEC accounts for nearly 62 per cent of global GDP and nearly half of global trade.

India's Willingness to Join the APEC Grouping:

India, which presently has 'observer' status, has been very keen to join the economic grouping as a full member.

India has expressed interest in joining APEC, and made a formal request in 1991.

The request to join was based on India's geographical location, the potential size of the economy, and degree of trade interaction with the Asia-Pacific.

India Needs APEC because

- Strength of the grouping – The grouping represents more than a third of the world population, 47% of global trade and 60% of world GDP.
- Aspiration of India – India aspires to become a \$5 trillion economy and requires \$1 trillion for investment in infrastructure.
- Outside the west Europe, most of the capital surplus nations are in Asia Pacific which can quench India's thirst for investment.
- Natural Corollary to "Act East" Policy – Indian has already become a member of SCO. Joining APEC is a natural corollary to Act East Policy of India.



Why is India not a Part of the APEC Grouping?

Although many members have been in favour of the inclusion of India, some opposed the idea citing the economic reforms which took place in the country and claiming that it has 'protectionist instincts'.

APEC's guiding motive was to resist protectionist policies by individual member states, and the promotion of trade liberalisation and economic cooperation within the affiliated Asia-Pacific economies.

By that description, India did not seem to fit in.

The main impediment, apparently, has been the opposition of some participants who have held India's record on economic reforms and WTO engagement to be unsatisfactory and unworthy of meriting inclusion as a member in the grouping.

Another reason for not making India part of the grouping was a membership freeze which came into force in 1997. However, it was not extended in 2012.

There has been a renewed push to grant membership status to India.

A majority of members now believe that India must be brought into the fold for it has shown progress in reforming and liberalising its economy.

Granting India membership status may also act as a catalyst for trade reform among emerging economies.

Moreover, India's maritime strength and strong strategic relations with the region's major powers, member states point out, could be used to bring strategic balance within the grouping.

Enhance Innovation Ecosystems

MoU between India and USA to Enhance Innovation Ecosystems through an Innovation Handshake under the framework of India – U.S. Commercial Dialogue.

Kick-off Industry Roundtable held under Innovation Handshake titled “Decoding the “Innovation Handshake”: U.S. – India Entrepreneurship Partnership”



A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on “Enhancing Innovation Ecosystems through an Innovation Handshake” under the framework of India – U.S. Commercial Dialogue was signed between the two countries on the 14th of November 2023 in San Francisco. The leaders’ Joint Statement during the historic official State Visit of Prime Minister in June 2023 announced the establishment of the “Innovation Handshake”.

The MoU was signed at the kick-off industry roundtable titled, “Decoding the “Innovation Handshake”: U.S. – India Entrepreneurship Partnership” in San Francisco. At the event, co-hosted by the U.S.-India Business Council (USIBC) and the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and supported by National Association of Software and Service Companies (NASSCOM) and Startup India, CEOs from major ICT companies, executives from venture capital firms, and founders of startups in the critical and emerging technology space discussed how to enhance U.S.-India technology collaboration.

The MoU is signed with the objective to connect the two sides’ dynamic startup ecosystems, address specific regulatory hurdles to cooperation, share information and best practices for startup fundraising and promote innovation and job growth, particularly in critical and emerging technologies (CET) as



identified under India -U.S. initiative for Critical and Emerging Technology (iCET).

The MoU signals a joint commitment to strengthen the startup ecosystem in deep tech sectors and promote cooperation in Critical and Emerging Technologies (CET). It is poised to positively impact economic activity, attract investment, and generate employment, especially in start-ups working in CET areas. The scope of cooperation would include a series of India- U.S. Innovation Handshake events, including hackathon and “Open Innovation” programs, information sharing and other activities.

The announcement laid the groundwork for two future Innovation Handshake events scheduled to take place in India and the United States in early 2024, which include an investment forum aimed toward helping U.S. and Indian startup companies take their innovative ideas and products to market and a “hackathon” in Silicon Valley where U.S. and Indian startups will pitch ideas and technologies to help address global economic challenges.

This momentous step signifies the commitment of both nations towards fostering innovation, creating opportunities, and promoting mutual growth in the dynamic field of emerging technologies. The "Innovation Handshake" sets the stage for a new era of collaboration between the United States and India.

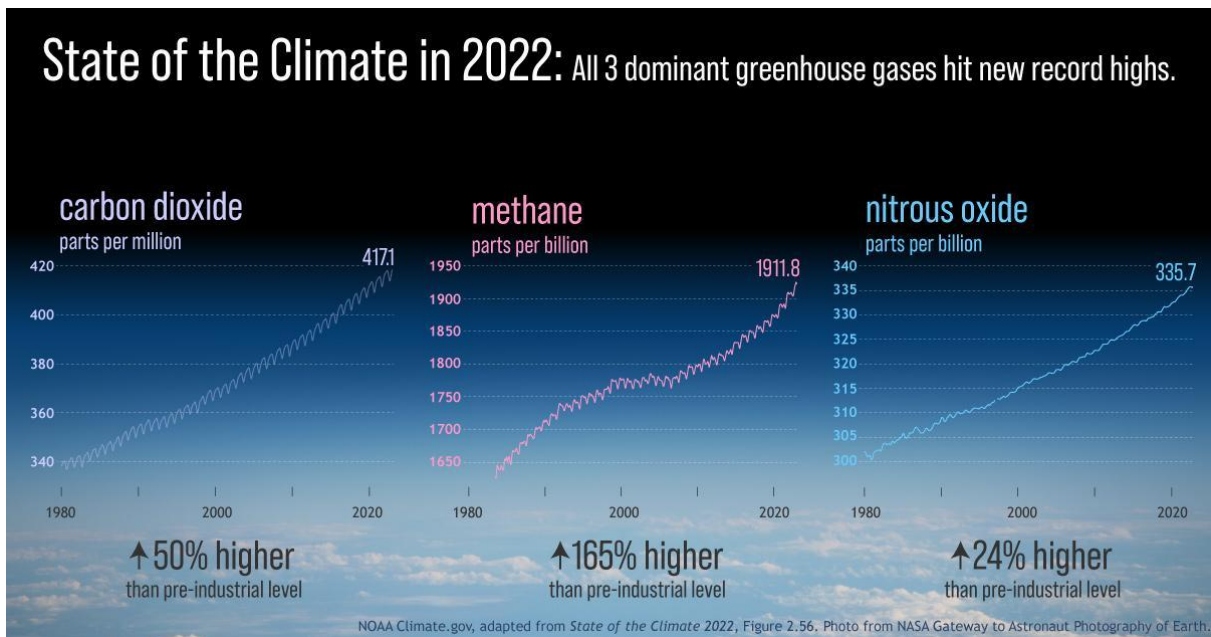
The Commercial Dialogue (CD) is a cooperative undertaking at Ministerial level between India and the U.S. to facilitate regular discussion to deepen ties between business communities, encompassing regular government-to-government meetings to be held in conjunction with private sector meetings, with an aim to facilitate trade, and maximize investment opportunities across a broad range of economic sectors.

The 5th India-U.S. Commercial Dialogue was held on 10th March 2023 during the visit of U.S. Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo between 8-10 March. At the meeting the Commercial Dialogue was re-launched with strategic focus on supply chain resiliency, climate and clean technology cooperation, advancing inclusive digital economy, and facilitating post-pandemic economic recovery especially for SMEs and startups.

It included launch of a new Working Group on Talent, Innovation and Inclusive Growth (TIIG) under the Commercial Dialogue. It was noted that this Working Group would also support efforts of Startups working towards goals of iCET, particularly in identifying specific regulatory hurdles to cooperation and fostering greater connectivity between our innovation ecosystems with focus on start-ups through specific ideas for joint activities.

GHGs level in 2022

The concentrations of greenhouse gases (GHG) rose to record levels in 2022, according to World Meteorological Organisation (WMO).



Findings of WMO

The rise in concentrations of GHGs is mainly due to the use of fossil fuels for various human activities.



This would lead to a further rise in global average temperatures, sea-level rise, glacial melting and an increase in frequency and intensity of rapid-onset extreme weather events such as torrential rainfall, flash floods, tropical cyclones and heatwaves.

Global average concentrations of carbon dioxide (CO₂), which is the most important GHG, reached 417.9 parts per million, for the first time in 2022.

The figure is 50 percent higher than pre-industrial levels. The concentration levels continued to grow in 2023.

The last time CO₂ concentration was at this level was 3-5 million years ago when the Earth's average temperature was 2-3 degrees Celsius warmer and sea levels were 10-20 meters higher than they are today.

The rate at which CO₂ levels grew in the last year was slightly lower than in 2021 and the average for the decade.

This was most likely due to natural, short-term variations in the carbon cycle and that new emissions as a result of industrial activities continued to rise.

Around 50 percent of this CO₂ remains in the atmosphere, causing global warming.

Around 25 percent is absorbed by the oceans, causing ocean acidification, which is harmful for marine plants and animals. Another 30 percent is absorbed by ecosystems on land, such as forests.

All these are known carbon sinks, though there is considerable year-on-year variability in them.

The concentrations of the other two major GHGs — methane and nitrous oxide — also grew in 2022.

Methane, which has the second-highest concentration in the atmosphere, reached 1,923 parts per billion.

Nitrous oxide, which has the third-highest concentration in the atmosphere, reached 335.8 parts per billion. It saw the highest year-on-year increase from 2021 to 2022. The gas is 300 times more potent than CO₂ at trapping heat.



CO₂ accounts for 64 per cent of the global warming effect, while methane accounts for 16 per cent and nitrous oxide accounts for 7 per cent.

As long as emissions continue, CO₂ will continue accumulating in the atmosphere, leading to global temperature rise.

Given the long life of CO₂, the temperature level already observed will persist for several decades even if emissions are rapidly reduced to Net Zero.

Despite decades of warnings from the scientific community, thousands of pages of reports and dozens of climate conferences, we are still heading in the wrong direction.

Socioeconomic and environmental costs will soar. We must reduce the consumption of fossil fuels as a matter of urgency.

There are still a lot of uncertainties in understanding the mechanisms of how CO₂ moves between the ocean, the land biosphere and the permafrost areas, as per the organisation.

The Global Greenhouse Gas Watch (GGGW) could help with understanding and resolving these uncertainties. The monitoring body was approved by the WMO recently.

These uncertainties, however, must not deter action. Instead, they highlight the need for flexible, adaptive strategies and the importance of risk management in the path to Net-Zero and the realisation of the Paris Agreement's goals.

The provision of accurate, timely, and actionable data on greenhouse gas fluxes becomes more critical.

The GGGW shall ensure sustained GHG monitoring “in order to be able to account for both human activities related and natural sources and sinks.

KANGRI

As winter tightens its icy grip on the Kashmir valley, the traditional fire pot known as “Kangri” is seeing a surge in demand. In the village of Wokai, located in South Kashmir's Kulgam district, artisans are working tirelessly to produce 5,000 Kangris each day to meet this seasonal spike.



Details

Kangri is a traditional fire pot or portable heater used predominantly in the Kashmir Valley.

It's an integral part of the local culture and plays a crucial role in the lives of Kashmiris, especially during the bitter cold winters.

Origins and Cultural Significance

Historical Roots: The Kangri has been a part of Kashmiri culture for centuries, tracing its origins to the region's ancient traditions and the need for warmth in the harsh winter months.

Symbol of Warmth and Comfort: It is not just a heating device but holds significant cultural symbolism, representing warmth, comfort, and companionship during cold weather.

Design and Construction

Materials: Typically, Kangri is made from clay and twigs of the willow tree. The clay pot forms the base while the wickerwork around it provides insulation and protects the user from the direct heat.

Shape and Structure: The Kangri consists of a round, earthenware pot filled with glowing embers or hot charcoal. It is then covered with a wicker casing, usually woven from willow twigs.

Utility and Functionality

Heating Purpose: Its primary function is to provide warmth by emitting heat stored in the hot charcoal or embers. Kashmiris tuck the Kangri under their traditional long woolen cloaks called 'pherans' to keep themselves warm.



Versatility: Kangri is not limited to personal use; it's also used to warm beds, and some families even use it for cooking simple meals or brewing Kahwa (a traditional Kashmiri tea).

Cultural Significance

Symbol of Kashmiri Identity: The Kangri is deeply entrenched in Kashmiri culture and traditions, often featured in local literature, art, and folklore, symbolizing resilience and the spirit of survival in harsh conditions.

Ceremonial Importance: It holds significance in ceremonies like marriages, where it symbolizes prosperity and well-being for the newlyweds.

The Kangri, with its rich historical significance and cultural symbolism, stands as a testament to the traditions and lifestyle of the Kashmiri people. While modernization has introduced alternative heating methods, the Kangri continues to hold a special place in the hearts of Kashmiris and remains a symbol of their identity and resilience.