

The Youngest of the Sciences



The Origins, Taxonomy, and Urgent Application
of Anthropology in Imperial India

CRIMINOLOGICAL INSIGHTS



BY DR. MRIDUL SRIVASTAVA

The Science of Man: Defining Anthropology and the Indian Context



The Framework of the Science

Anthropology: The Study of Mankind

Investigates the history of Man in relation to his fellows and evolutionary progress.



Distinguishes between general human principles...

...and the specific descriptive details of tribes.

The Urgent Mission in India

The Threat of Rapid Modernisation

Spreading railways and telegraphs are causing primitive customs to disappear at high speed.



India's Incalculable Research Wealth

Spreading railways and telegraphs are causing primitive customs to disappear at high speed.

India's Incalculable Research Wealth

The region offers a vast, systematic mass of materials for studying human origins.

Essential Preservation Tasks

Systematic collection of physical specimens and traditions is vital for future historical records.



Physical Anthropology

Branch | Sub-disciplines

Cultural Anthropology



The proper study of Man is man, yet it is generally disregarded.

“The youngest of the Sciences,’ and everybody is aware of its vast importance... A peculiarity of the study of Anthropology, says Dr. A. C. Haddon, is the lack of demarcations. ”

I. The Objective

To unfold the secrets of man's acts, passions, and wants—in the past and possibly in the future.

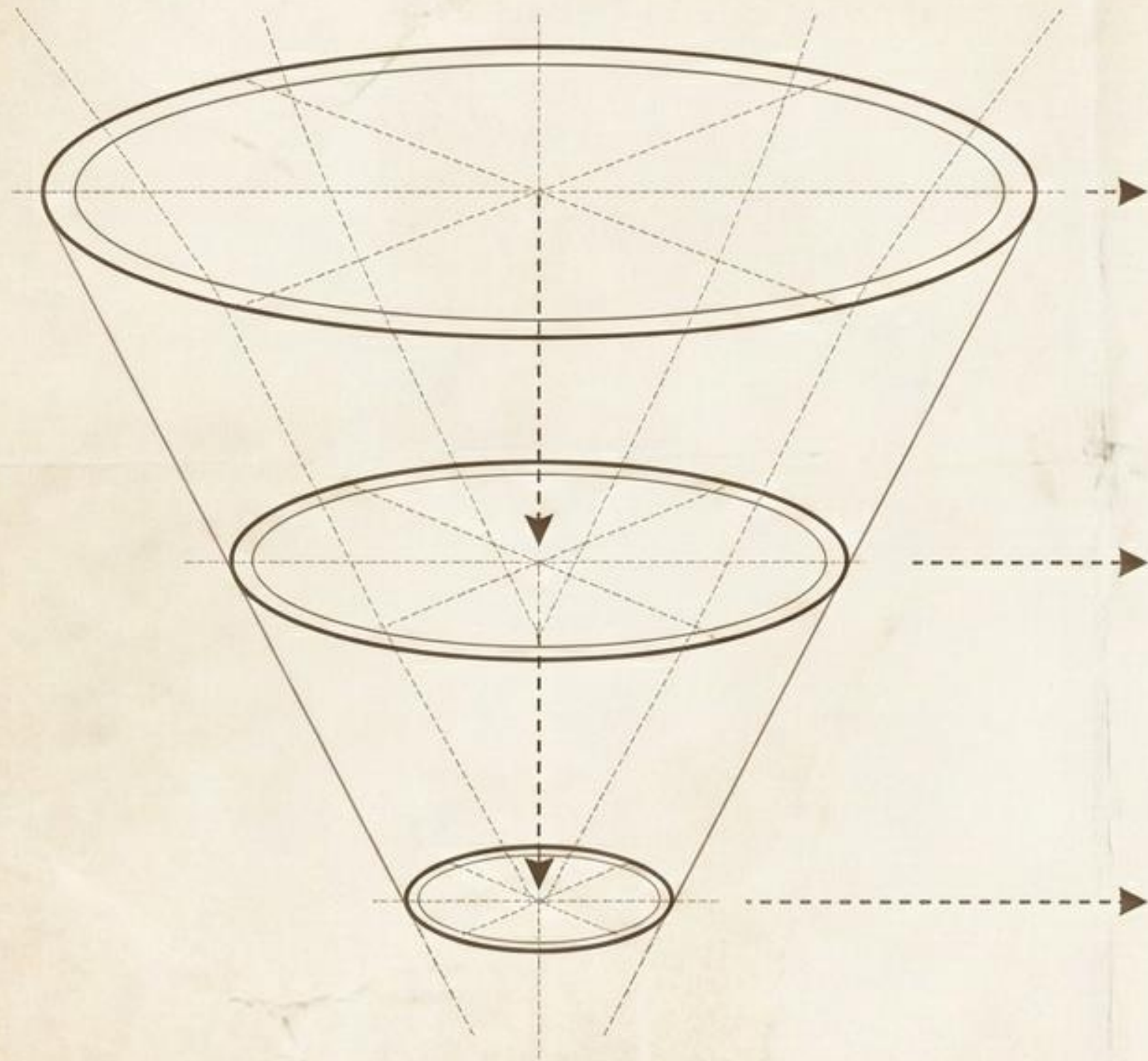
II. The Scope

To exercise more influence on social organisations than any other science.

III. The Synthesis

To group scattered fragments of knowledge from naturalists, physicians, and travellers to grasp what man is and has done.

Narrowing the focus: from the universe to the tribe.



Anthropology

The Natural History of Man. Man's origin and his relations to the rest of the universe.

Ethnology

Comparative varieties of mankind. Analysing the physical and psychological differences between races.

Ethnography

Descriptive details of human aggregates. The rational exposition of specific hordes, clans, and tribes.

Defining the boundaries of the Anthropological Triad.

Anthropology (The Whole)

Scope: The complete history of Man, pervaded by the idea of evolution.

Focus: Man in nature (Natural Man) and Man in relation to his fellows (Social Man).

Methodology: Invokes Zoology, Comparative Anatomy, and Pre-historic Archaeology to trace origins.

Ethnology (The Comparative)

Scope: The permanent varieties of mankind and their relation to each other.

Focus: Physical traits (crania, stature, hair) and environmental adaptation (the milieu).

Methodology: Borrows anatomical data; interprets the 'how' and 'why' of racial modifications.

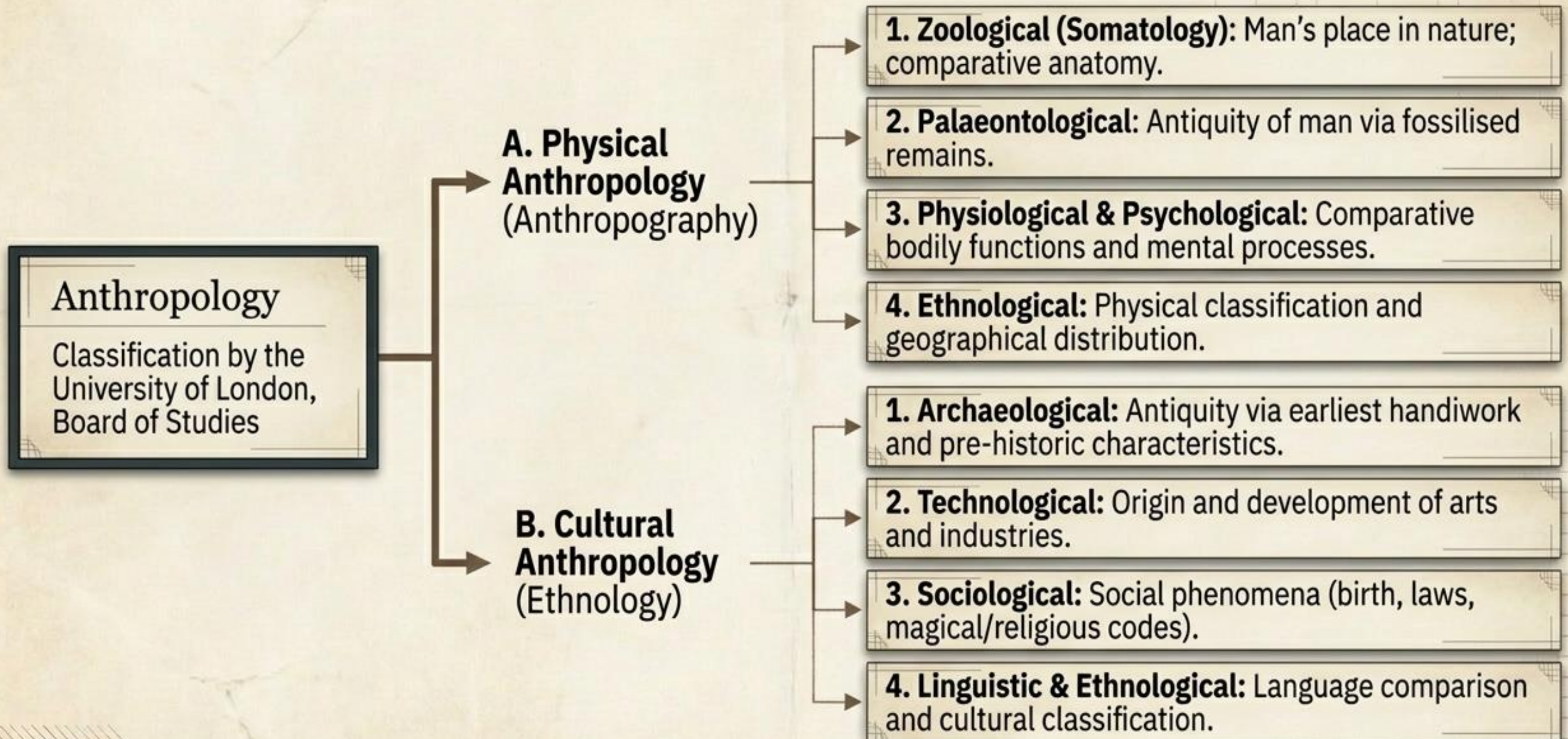
Ethnography (The Descriptive)

Scope: Particular tribes, institutions, and customs prevailing among peoples.

Focus: The raw materials of human existence—superstitions, legends, and daily practices.

Methodology: Collects orderly facts without attempting to solve general problems of evolution.

The formal architecture of the discipline distinguishes the physical from the cultural.



The new science threatened the orthodox timeline of human creation.

The Scriptural Limit

Orthodox Context: The church fulminated against those believing in antipodal man or an existence older than 6,000 years.

Quote: "Man was created by the Trinity on October 23, 4004 B.C., at 9 o'clock in the morning." — Dr. Lightfoot, Vice-Chancellor of Cambridge.



The Anthropological View

Emerging Evidence: The undeniable physical evidence of the antiquity of man, fossil records, and the broader evolutionary timeline that shattered the literal interpretation of scripture.

The pursuit of human history was heavily policed by state and church alike.

Friction & Acceptance

Mid-18th Century

1816–1818

1846 & 1859

1913

Buffon's lectures on anthropological subjects spark a storm of protest from the church in France, forcing him to suppress his views.

Sir William Lawrence delivers lectures on the Natural History of Man in England; accused of propagating detrimental opinions and forced to call in his published work.

The Government of France initially opposes Anthropological Society; upon founding, a police agent attends for two years to ensure discussions remain within "orthodox limits".

Acceptance Achieved. A Royal Commission on University Education declares Ethnology a "necessary adjunct," crucial for Colonial Office officials administering the Empire.

Ethnography seeks to prove that mankind is not divided by gaps, but by steps.

The Task:

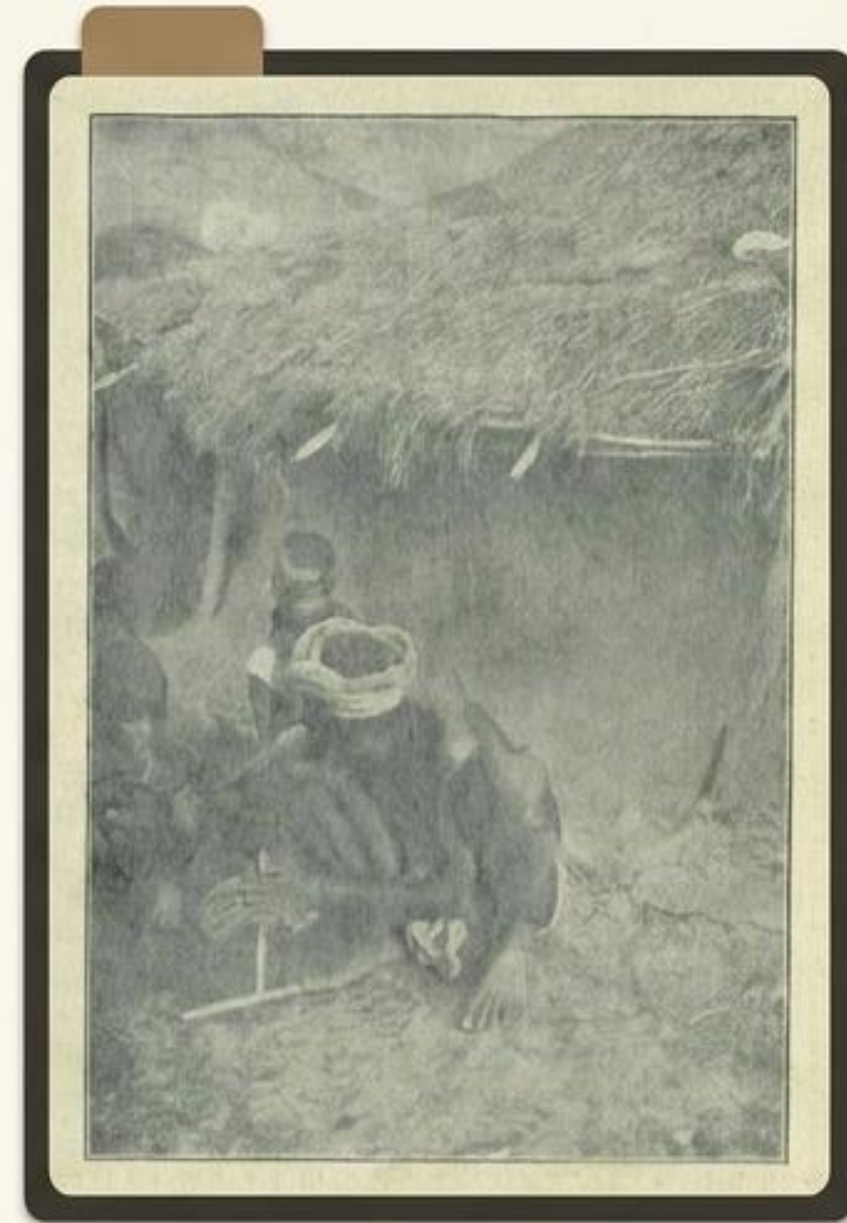
To trace the neglected lower strata of society and demonstrate the unity and completeness of the human race.

The Insight:

Elementary ideas have an irresistible power of expansion. There is no reason why they should stop at a modern city or the fire place of a Hill Vedan.

The Reality:

Races have remained superficially unchanged for thousands of years in physical appearance, speech, and religion, repeating the history of the generation before them.

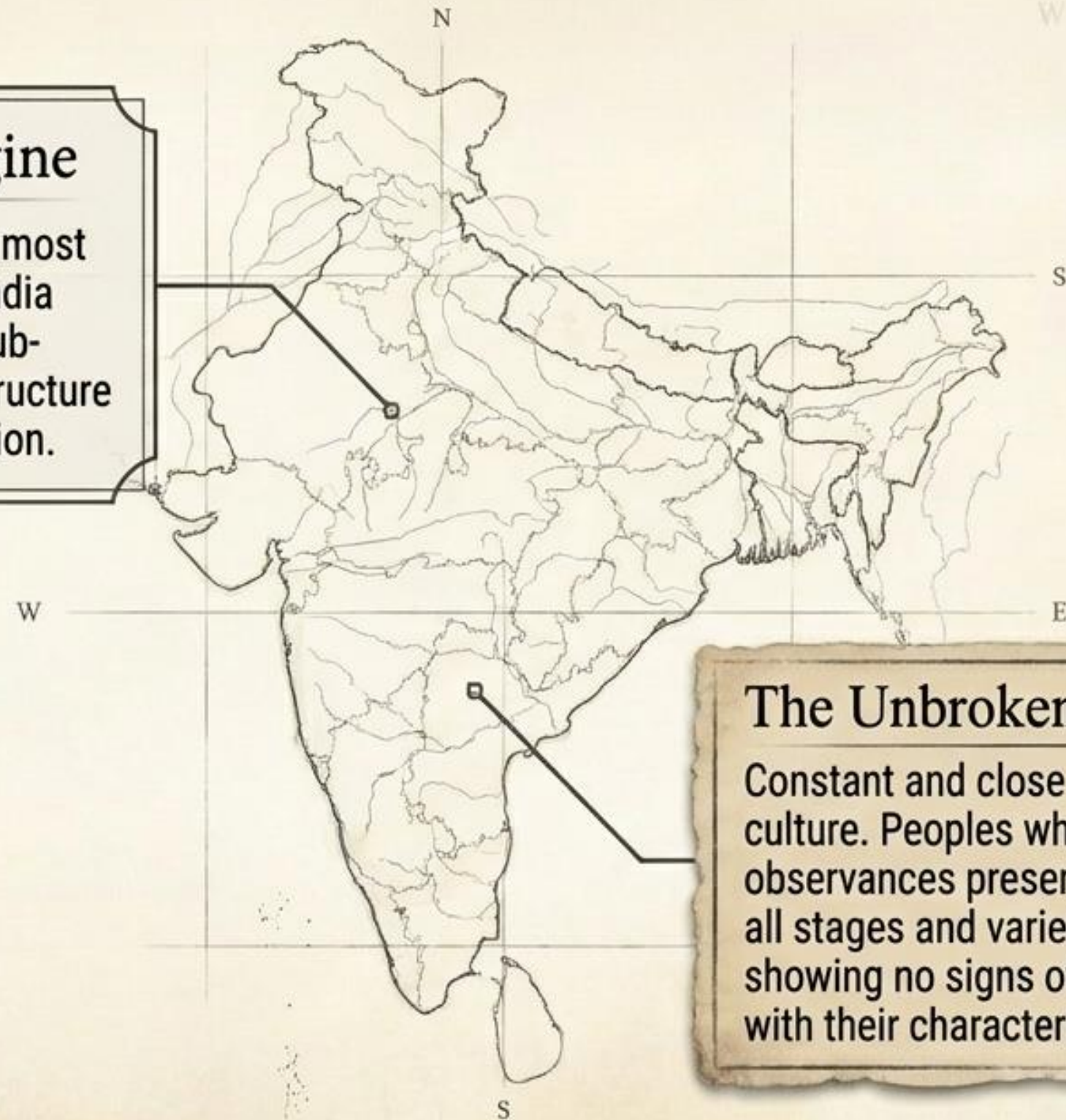


A Hill Arayan of the Travancore Hills producing fire by drilling. This act connects modern observers directly to the pre-historic past.

India presented unparalleled opportunities for the formation of a trustworthy record.

The Administrative Engine

A highly administrative body of the most modern type. The Government of India provided the systematic funding, subsidisation, and bureaucratic infrastructure necessary for massive data collection.



The Unbroken Lineage

Constant and close contact with primitive culture. Peoples whose beliefs and observances presented living examples of all stages and varieties of primitive culture, showing no signs of dying out or parting with their characteristic superstitions.

Systematic observation replaced incidental collection in British India

The Pioneers

Historians like Mount Stuart Elphinstone and Dr. John Short, who was the first to make systematic observations in Physical Anthropology in India.

Provincial Surveys

Mr. Crooke's exhaustive volumes on the Castes and Tribes of the North-West Provinces, and Dalton's seminal Ethnology of Bengal.

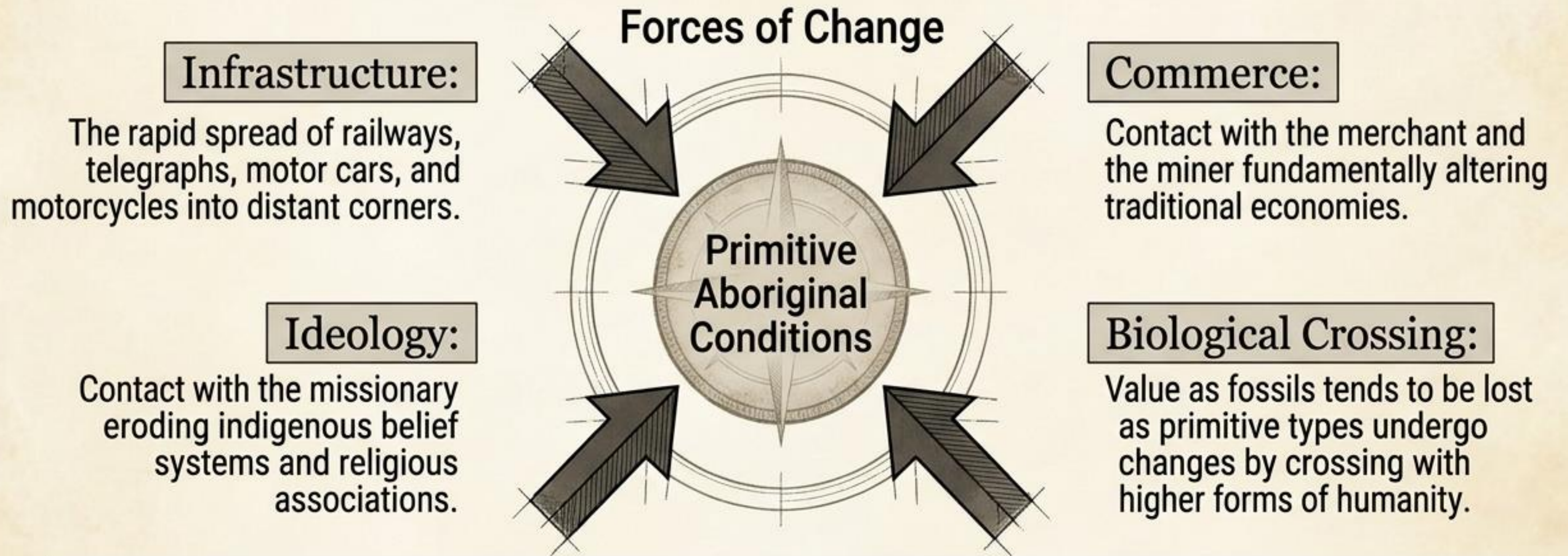
The Grand Scheme

Lord Curzon's Government obtaining sanction from the Secretary of State for a highly comprehensive, India-wide Ethnographic Survey.

The Census

Sir Herbert Risley's integration of the work into the Anthropometric Branch of the 1901 Census of India, leading to his 1908 work, People of India.

The fossils of the Anthropologist are living organisms, and they are fast disappearing.

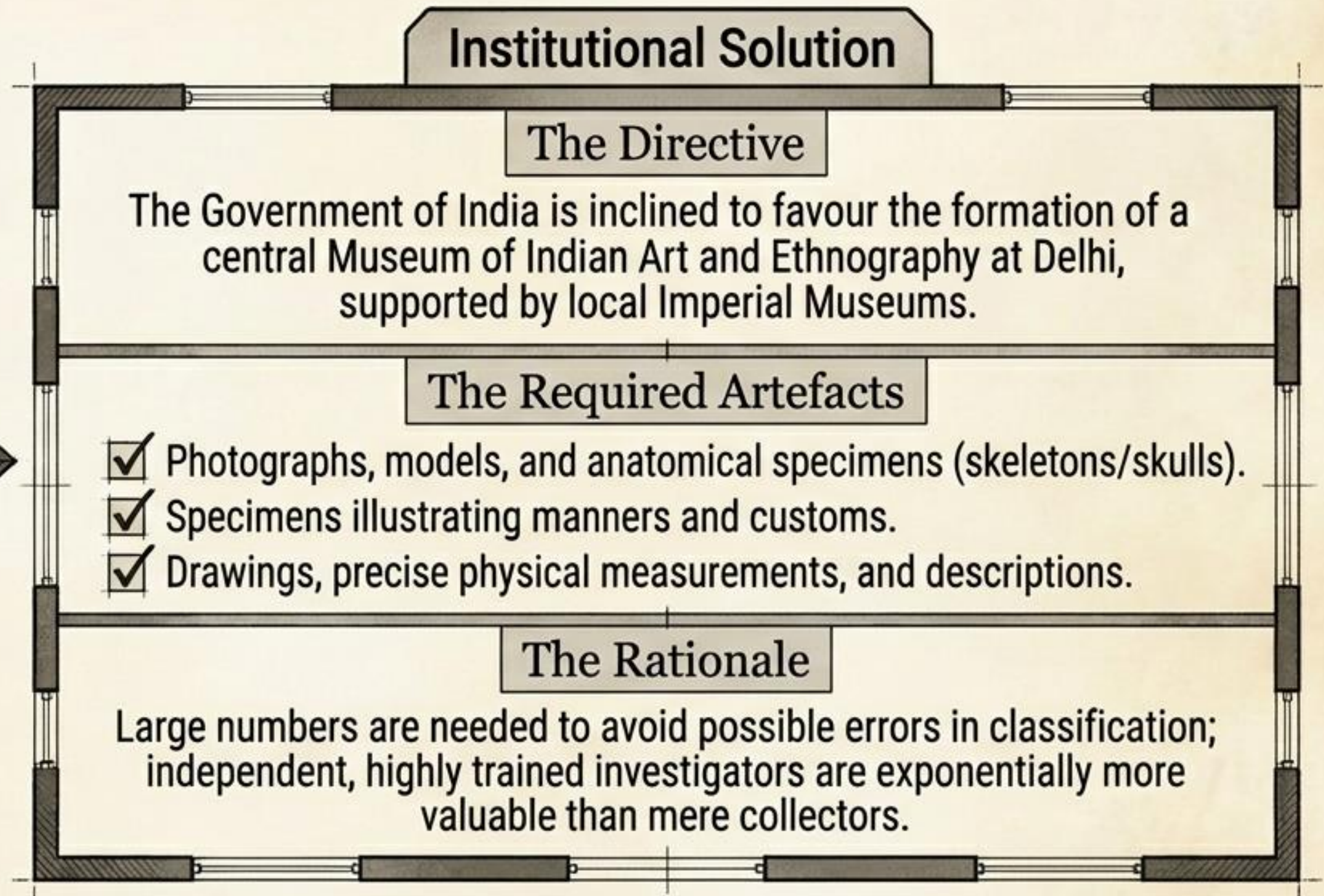
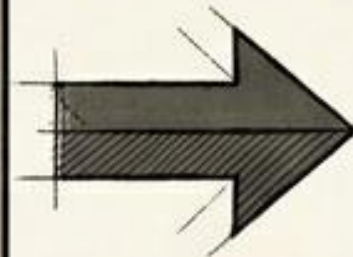


Unlike geologists who can revisit rocks, anthropologists face the immediate extermination or degeneration of their raw materials.

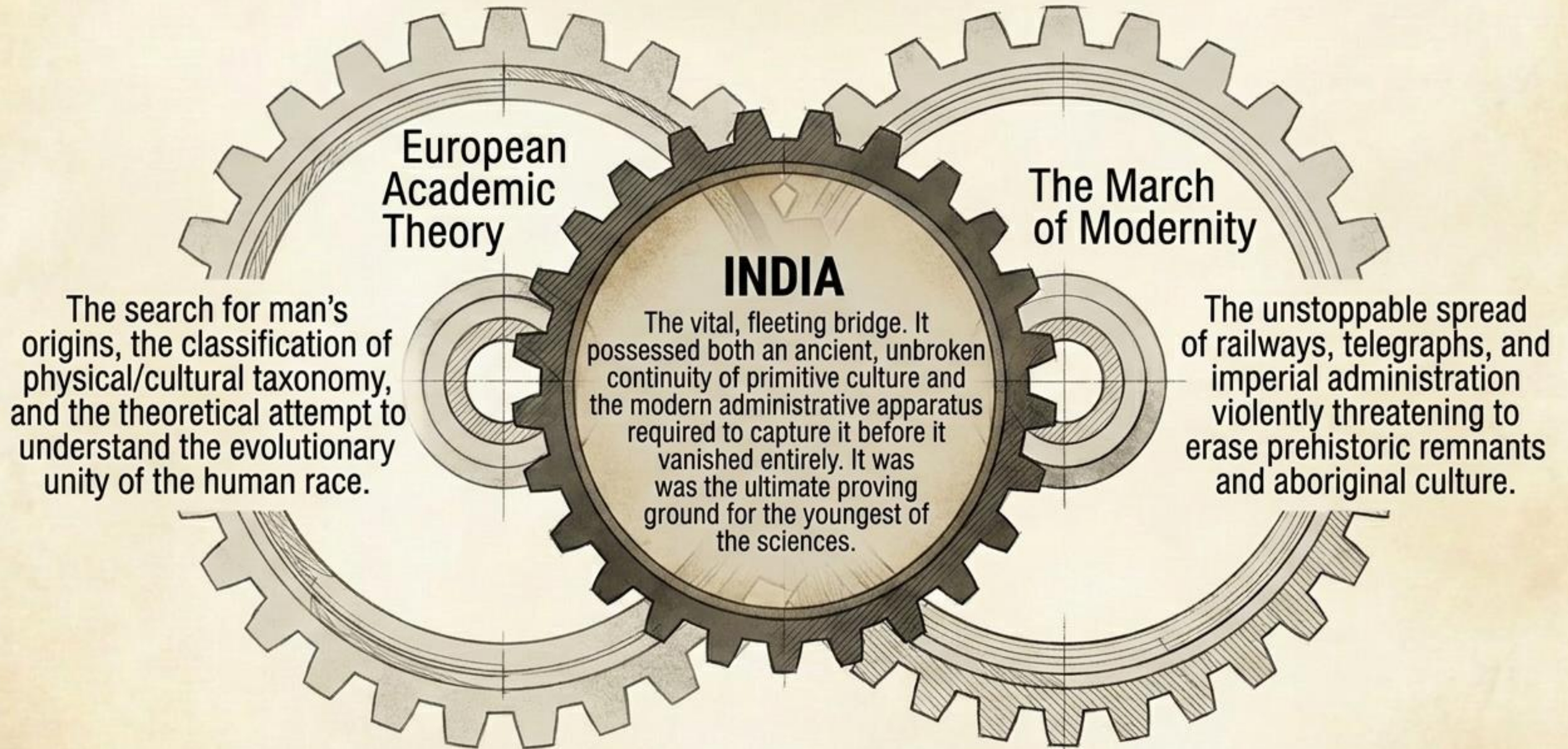
The mandate to collect and preserve before the dark places of the earth are illuminated.

**The Catalyst:
July 1911, Simla**

Without local museums, students would be compelled to visit Paris, Berlin, or Munich to study Indian subjects.



The Indian Synthesis: Theory meets the living archive.



The ultimate value of objective human study.

“

To do this, we must confine ourselves to a strictly objective consideration of facts... to possess a wide practical knowledge of the human mind, and a of human nature in all its most delicate emotions.

”

The Necessity of Objectivity

Cultural phenomena (myths, weapons, institutions) cannot be separated; they are an integral part of whole culture. Proper study demands absolute freedom from the the bonds of one's own mental world.

The Ultimate Goal

The true aim of Anthropology is a firm grip on the numerous possibilities of human existence, the consideration of which is the only reliable way to prevent one-sided, prejudiced conclusions.