



Bharitalasuchus Tapani: A Carnivorous Reptile

Why in News

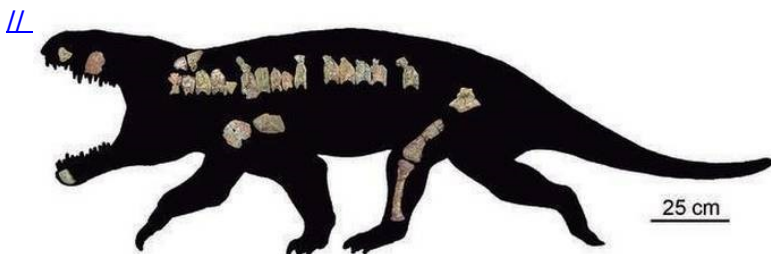
Recently, an international team of paleontologists has thrown light on a carnivorous reptile that lived 240 million years ago (Bharitalasuchus tapani).

- The Team studied some of the fossil specimens stored at the Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata.
- In the mid 20th century, researchers from the Institute carried out extensive studies on rocks of the Yerrapalli Formation in what is now Telangana, uncovering several fossils.

Key Points

▪ About:

- This reptile belongs to a **genus and species previously unknown to science**. They named it **Bharitalasuchus tapani (BT)**.
- BT **were robust animals with big heads and large teeth**, and these probably predated other smaller reptiles.
 - They were **approximately the size of an adult male lion and might have been the largest predators in their ecosystems**.
- In the **Telugu language**, Bhari means huge, Tala means head, and Suchus is the name of the Egyptian crocodile-headed deity.
- The species is named after **paleontologist Tapan Roy Chowdhury** in honour of his contribution to Indian vertebrate paleontology and especially his extensive work on the **Yerrapalli Formation** tetrapod fauna.
- Further studies revealed that the reptile **belonged to a family of extinct reptiles named Erythrosuchidae**.
 - Erythrosuchids are known from Lower-Middle Triassic rocks of South Africa, Russia, and China, and there have been preliminary reports from the Middle Triassic Yerrapalli Formation of south-central India.



▪ Yerrapalli Formation:

- It is a Triassic (period from 250-201 million years ago) rock formation consisting primarily of mudstones that outcrops in the Pranhita-Godavari Basin in southeastern India.

- Apart from this erythrosuchid reptile, the fossil assemblage of the Yerrapalli Formation **includes many other extinct creatures** such as ceratodontid lungfish, rhynchosaur and allokosaurian.
- However, **deforestation, mining, agricultural expansion, urbanisation** are gradually destroying the fossiliferous localities of India.

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