Title:	MULTIDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVES ON EARLY-TO- MIDDLE PLEISTOCENE (2.58-0.63 Ma) CONTEXTS IN THE SIWALIK HILLS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR HOMININ ADAPTATIONS IN NORTHERN INDIA.
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Abstract:	Global climate shifts during the Plio-Pleistocene period, transitioning from forest-dominated to grassland-dominated landscapes, have been identified as pivotal for hominin dynamics across the Old World. However, hypotheses regarding increased aridity, global cooling, and monsoon intensification further shaping early hominin dispersal(s) and evolution are undergoing reassessment considering recent research indicating diverse ecological niches inhabited by early hominins. The Siwalik Hills region in the Indian Subcontinent possesses extensive Early-Middle Pleistocene deposits, notably the Pinjor Formation. Scholars have posited faunal similarities between the Pinjor Formation and other hominin-bearing sites globally, suggesting a potential expansion route into the Indian Subcontinent through this region. Despite the presence of associated fauna indicative of hominin occupation, confirmed hominin remains remain elusive, with only lithic artefacts and unconfirmed fossil finds hinting at past human presence. This doctoral thesis aims to elucidate the palaeoecological contexts for hominin dispersals in the Siwalik Hills region through vertebrate palaeontology, taphonomy, and archaeology. Key research questions include inquiries into palaeoenvironmental conditions, the contextual relationship between lithic artefacts and faunal fossils, traces of hominin meat extracting activities on Quaternary vertebrate fossils, and the potential for predicting new palaeontological sites based on specific parameters. The Pinjor Formation in the Siwalik Hills, north of Chandigarh in northern India, has been identified as the primary study area, known for its extensive Quaternary deposits and rich vertebrate fossil record. Notable findings from systematic surveys in neighbouring regions, suchas the Riwat and Pabbi Hills in Pakistan, and Masol in India, highlight the significance of the Siwalik Hills in understanding early hominin occupation in South Asia. Despite controversies surrounding certain findings, such as those from the Masol site, the Siwalik Hills present a promising avenue for future research into early human evolution and dispersal. This research advocates for a multidisciplinary approach to unravelling the complexities of human prehistory in this region.
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