

Discovery of Madtsoiidae snake fossil in Ladakh Himalaya

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In news—Scientists have recently reported spotting of the fossil of a Madtsoiidae snake from the molasse deposits of Ladakh Himalaya for the first time.

Key updates-

- As per recent discovery, Scientists have reported for the first time a **Madtsoiidae snake from the late Oligocene (part of the Tertiary Period in the Cenozoic Era**, and lasted from about 33.7 to 23.8 million years ago) **of India or the molasse deposits of Ladakh Himalaya.**
- **The occurrence of Madtsoiidae from the Oligocene of Ladakh indicates their continuity at least to the end of the Paleogene** (geologic period and system that spans 43 million years from the end of the Cretaceous Period 66 million years ago).
- The research shows that the **members of this group were successful in this subcontinent for much longer time than previously thought.**
- **The global climatic shifts and the prominent biotic reorganization across the Eocene-Oligocene boundary** (which correlates to the European Grande Coupure), **did not cause the extinction** of this important group of snakes in India.

About Madtsoiidae snake-

- **Madtsoiidae is an extinct family of mostly Gondwanan snakes with a fossil record extending from early Cenomanian (Upper Cretaceous) to late Pleistocene** strata

located in South America, Africa, India, Australia and Southern Europe.

- Madtsoiidae **include very primitive snakes**, which **like extant boas and pythons** would likely dispatch their prey by constriction.
- **Genera include Gigantophis, one of the longest snakes known**, at an estimated 10.7 metres (35 ft), and the Australian *Wonambi* and *Yurlunggur*.
- As a grouping of basal forms the composition and even the validity of Madtsoiidae is in a state of flux as new pertinent finds are described.
- From the fossil record, the whole group disappeared in the mid-Paleogene across most Gondwanan continents except for Australia where it survived with its last known taxon *Wonambi* till late Pleistocene.
- The newly described specimen is housed in the repository of Wadia Institute, an autonomous institute of Department of Science and Technology.