ANTHROPOLOGY NEWS DIARY (AND) FOR UPSC CSE MAINS

16.04.2021

This series provides compilation of daily CURRENT AFFAIRS of Anthropology.

It is aimed at addressing the requirement of aspirants to add contemporary aspects of the subject to the answers.

It also helps in understanding the trends of anthropology across India and the world.

NOTE: Please attempt the questions given at the end of the document and can upload on the telegram channel: Sosin for Anthropology Q&A, for peer review

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Note - For convenience, the respective reference links have been dropped at the end of every topic.
A. TRIBAL AFFAIRS

1. LEFT WING EXTREMISM - ISSUES FACED BY LOCAL TRIBES
   Context:
   • The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) raised the Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (CoBRA), to combat the Naxals but time and again the force has suffered at the hands of these Naxals.
   • Among the many threats that our country witnesses, internal threat by Left Wing Extremism (LWE) is one that has been simmering for long.
   • Over the decades, our Paramilitary Forces (PMF) have been given a free hand to equip themselves with improved weapons and support technology, as required to combat the Naxals in Central India.

   Issues faced by local tribes:
   • The Gondi speaking tribes residing in the dense forest of Bastar, Dantewada, Sukma, Bijapur, Narayanpur, Kanker and Kondagaon are known to be exploited by the Naxals.
   • The Naxals are adept in living off the land and have become a messiah to these tribes in the absence of governance and development.
   • There are liberated areas like ‘Abhujmad’, an area of 7000 sq km mainly in Chhattisgarh, which has no administrative machinery or police stations to govern this huge mass of land having nearly 237 villages and a population of about 20,000 tribals. This area serves as the Nerve Centre of Naxalites housing logistic and training bases. This area has not even been surveyed by the revenue department.
   • Exploitation and oppression of dalits, adivasis and landless people, living in interior areas due to feudal agrarian system and strong interface of caste and class. For the adivasis forest is their natural habitat and their means of livelihood. They have been deprived of their land and even the picking rights of the minor forest produce through the unfair Forest Conservation Act of 1980, which needs immediate relook.

   Reference:
   https://www.financialexpress.com/defence/left-wing-extremism-neutralizing-indias-internal-threats/2233544/

2. “River People” in Assam
   Context:
   For decades, the Mising people, a minority group in Northeast India, have fought for tribal autonomy and cultural recognition. Today they face growing challenges to their way of life.
Highlights:

- Historically, the Mising, a community of around 700,000 people, have inhabited areas close to the Brahmaputra, earning them the label of “river people” by those who live on the mainland. Outsiders see the river as an unpredictable force—one that constantly brings in silt, disrupting the lives of the people who make their homes near it.
- The Mising, accordingly, are often portrayed by outsiders as people isolated from the rest of “civilization,” living temporary, fluid existences.
- The Mising have adopted some religious and lifestyle practices of the majority Assamese Hindu population over the centuries since their waves of migration from the eastern Himalayan mountains to the plains of the Brahmaputra River Valley around the 13th or 14th century.
- However, in many ways the Mising remain rooted in distinct ways of life connected to other cultural groups living along the Brahmaputra River in the hilly regions of the adjacent Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh and the mountains of Tibet.
- The Mising have adopted some religious and lifestyle practices of the majority Assamese Hindu population over the centuries since their waves of migration from the eastern Himalayan mountains to the plains of the Brahmaputra River Valley around the 13th or 14th century.
- However, in many ways the Mising remain rooted in distinct ways of life connected to other cultural groups living along the Brahmaputra River in the hilly regions of the adjacent Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh and the mountains of Tibet.
- Mising have been fighting for political recognition, land allocations, and cultural and linguistic freedom as part of a broader tribal autonomy movement in Assam.
- The Mising involved in this movement assert that their belonging in Assam has connections to cultures and regions woven together by the Brahmaputra River and its tributaries, which cut across contemporary postcolonial state boundaries in India.
B. PALEONTOLOGY

1. Homo Erectus Fossils

Context:
Paleoanthropologists have uncovered two new specimens of *Homo erectus* at the East Turkana site in Kenya. They’ve also verified the age of a skull fragment of *Homo erectus* — one of the oldest specimens attributable to this species — found earlier at the same site.

Highlights:
- *Homo erectus* is the first hominin known that has a body plan more like present day human beings and seemed to be on its way to being more human-like.
- It had longer lower limbs than upper limbs, a torso shaped more like ours, a larger cranial capacity than earlier hominins, and is associated with a tool industry — it’s a faster, smarter hominin than *Australopithecus* and earliest *Homo*.
- In 1974, scientists at the East Turkana site in Kenya found one of the oldest specimens of *Homo erectus*: a 1.9-million-year-old skull fragment. The specimen is only surpassed in age by a 2-million-year-old skull specimen in South Africa.
- But there was pushback within the field, with some paleoanthropologists arguing that the East Turkana specimen could have come from a younger fossil deposit and was possibly moved by water or wind to the spot where it was found.
● The scientists used satellite data and aerial imagery to find out where the fossils were discovered, recreate the scene, and place it in a larger context to find the right clues for determining the age of the fossils.

● Although located in a different East Turkana collection area than initially reported, the skull specimen was found in a location that had no evidence of a younger fossil outcrop that may have washed there. This supports the original age given to the fossil.

Reference:

2. Neanderthal children
Context:
A new research paper published in “Scientific Reports” reveals the discovery and study of fossilized footprints found in southern Spain that are believed to have been created by Neanderthal children.

Highlights:
● The paper has to make a lot of assumptions, which is the nature of the beast when you’re trying to read into behaviors using nothing but leftover footprints from 100,000 years ago.
● The researchers had a good handle on what they think the young Neanderthals were up to, and it sounds a whole lot like what modern kids do at any given opportunity: hang out, play around, and act like the kids they are.
● The fossilized footprints were found at a National Park in mid-2020.
● The prints were hidden among fossilized animal trails carved into the ground by deer and wild boar. This led to scientists missing the hominid footprints entirely. The team behind this new paper eventually studied the sight and discovered that there were Neanderthal footprints hidden among the wild animal prints, two months after the tracks were first observed.
● While the area has prints from Neanderthals of various ages, it’s clear that it was a place where a lot of the kids hung out. Just like modern children that tend to form friend groups, it looks like these Neanderthal kids had a little clique of their own.

Reference:

3. Reasons Why Birds Are Not Living Dinosaurs
● Information-generating DNA “macromutations,” and mutations by random changes in the codes besides the genetic code (epigenetic, RNA splicing code, sugar code, membrane code, bioelectric code) generating substantial new information — altogether leading to macroevolutionary alterations bridging the gaps between genera, families, orders, etc., have never been observed. They are so utterly improbable that an evolutionist’s postulation of such positive macromutations is tantamount to the acceptance of miracles (“a miracle is an event that should appear impossible to a Darwinian in view of its ultra-cosmological
improbability within the framework of his own theory” — Schützenberger).

- Gradualism with its “innumerable slight variations,” “extremely slight variations,” and “infinitesimally small inherited variations,” etc., by mutations, which “have only slight or even invisible effects on the phenotype” (Mayr) has also been found to be totally invalid/impotent/baseless in order to explain the origin of synorganized new structures and primary species.

- Natural selection can explain “the survival of the fittest but not the arrival of the fittest. It can and must eradicate, hence kill. But it can’t create anything. Just as a sieve cannot create new grains, but can only sift the existing ones.

- Cladistics - Cladistics is an approach to biological classification in which organisms are categorized in groups based on hypotheses of most recent common ancestry.

- Dollo’s law: “[A]n organism cannot return, even partially, to a former state already realized in the series of its ancestors.

- Bird and dinosaur hand: “There lies a significant difference. There is no obvious selective advantage for the homeotic frame-shift hypothesis.

- Topsy-turvy phylogeny: The phylogenetic sequence of the dinosaur to bird hypothesis starting with Sinosauropteryx (which should thus be the oldest but is from the Lower Cretaceous) is to an astonishing degree in discord with the dates usually given for the paleontological record.

- Topsy-turvy phylogeny: As shown in detail above, the phylogenetic sequence of the dinosaur to bird hypothesis starting with Sinosauropteryx (which should thus be the oldest but is from the Lower Cretaceous) is to an astonishing degree in discord with the dates usually given for the paleontological record.

- The abrupt appearance of all modern bird families and orders being even richer and more comprehensive in Eocene strata than they are today speaks for intelligent/ingenious design.

**Reference:**
https://evolutionnews.org/2021/04/ten-reasons-why-birds-are-not-living-dinosaurs/

C. HUMAN GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

1. DNA modifications in IVF babies

**Context:**
Compared to newborns conceived traditionally, newborns conceived through in vitro fertilization (IVF) are more likely to have certain chemical modifications to their DNA, according to a new study.

**Highlights:**
- The study found only small differences in DNA methylation at birth and these were not seen in early childhood.
- The changes involve DNA methylation -- the binding of compounds known as methyl groups to DNA -- which can alter gene activity. Only one of the modifications was seen by the time the children were 9 years old.
- IVF consists of collecting eggs and sperm, fertilizing the eggs in a lab, and then transferring the resulting embryo or embryos into the uterus.
- When methyl groups are added to a gene, the gene is switched off and does not produce a protein. Methyl groups are added and removed from DNA throughout life, as genes are alternately switched on and off.
- Changes in methylation may occur in any step of IVF.
- Newborns conceived with IVF were more likely to have lower methylation levels in some parts of their DNA.
- The researchers did not find any methylation changes for newborns conceived by ovulation induction or intrauterine insemination.

Reference:
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1mJtSIzCBBv9qwnBWwivGQxIBT1r5ICfrYce7LhE_1/edit

UPSC Previous year questions based on today's concept:
1. Discuss the genetic and clinical aspects of anomalies of sex chromosomes in man with special references to the associated mosaic constitutions (L.Q - 1995)
2. Discuss the factors affecting growth and development in human beings (20 Marks - 2016)
3. Tribal Displacement (15 Marks - 2010)

DAILY PRACTICE QUESTION/S FOR MAINS 2021.

Pl do not forget to upload your answer sheet for a peer review on the telegram channel: Sosin for Anthropology Q&A
1. Contributions of Roy Burman to Indian anthropology and tribal administration. (20 marks)