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. SOCIO - CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY
   1. Polyandry
      Context:
      ● ‘Brina’ is Himachal’s first film based on subject of polyandry: Director Pawan Kumar Sharma
      ● It is a film based on a age old tradition depicting the plight of minor girls married to elderly persons for money and polyandry system prevailing in the interior areas of Himachal
      Polyandry:
      ● Polyandry is a form of polygamy in which a woman takes two or more husbands at the same time.
      ● Polyandry is contrasted with polygyny, involving one male and two or more females. If a marriage involves a plural number of "husbands and wives" participants of each gender, then it can be called polygamy, “group or cojoint marriage”.
      ● In its broadest use, polyandry refers to sexual relations with multiple males within or without marriage.
      ● Of the 1,231 societies listed in the 1980 Ethnographic Atlas, 186 were found to be monogamous; 453 had occasional polygyny; 588 had more frequent polygyny; and 4 had polyandry.
      ● Polyandry is less rare than this figure suggests, as it considered only those examples found in the Himalayan mountains (28 societies).
      ● Fraternal polyandry is practiced among Tibetans in Nepal and parts of China, in which two or more brothers are married to the same wife, with the wife having equal "sexual access" to them.
      ● Polyandry is believed to be more likely in societies with scarce environmental resources. It is believed to limit human population growth and enhance child survival.
      ● It is a rare form of marriage that exists not only among peasant families but also among the elite families.
      ● For example, polyandry in the Himalayan mountains is related to the scarcity of land. The marriage of all brothers in a family to the same wife allows family land to remain intact and undivided. If every brother married separately and had children, family land would be split into unsustainably small plots. In contrast, very poor persons not owning land were less likely to practice polyandry in Buddhist Ladakh and Zanskar.
      Reference:

B. LINGUISTIC ANTHROPOLOGY
   1. Maori saving language
      Context: Māori are trying to save their language from Big Tech
Highlights:

- Languages around the world are dying – the UN estimates that an indigenous language dies every two weeks. Racist assimilation policies are largely to blame.
- Into the 20th century, Māori children were often punished with shame or physical beatings when they spoke their native language in schools. As a result, when that generation reached adulthood, many chose not to pass on the language to their own children to protect them from the same types of persecution.
- This was a major cause of Māori language decline between 1920, 1960. Now, the fluent population within many indigenous groups is both shrinking and aging. The language – and the traditional knowledge embedded in it – are both at risk of extinction.
- Jones, the CEO of Te Hiku Media, and Keoni Mahelona, the chief technology officer, started to see a need for speech recognition after they digitised the massive audio collection Te Hiku had accumulated over 30 years of radio broadcasting.
- But to make this resource useful to Māori people living across the country and the world, Te Hiku would need to transcribe the audio. To transcribe the thousands of hours of Māori audio, they’d need to teach the computer to speak their language.
- To create speech recognition tools from scratch, with no prior data, it typically requires a ballpark figure of 10,000 hours of annotated audio.
- Te Hiku is adamant that the only people who should profit from the Māori language are the Māori people, themselves. And Te Hiku guards that right voraciously by maintaining sovereignty over the Māori data it has gathered over 30 years.
- This ensures that future economic opportunities always belong to the communities from which the data was gathered.

Reference:

https://www.wired.co.uk/article/maori-language-tech
C. ANTHROPOLOGIST IN NEWS

1. Margaret Mead
   - Margaret Mead was an American cultural anthropologist who featured frequently as an author and speaker in the mass media during the 1960s and 1970s.
   - Mead was a communicator of anthropology in modern American and Western Culture.
   - Her reports detailing the attitudes towards sex in South Pacific and Southeast Asian traditional cultures influenced the 1960s Sexual Revolution.
   - She was a proponent of broadening sexual conventions within the context of Western cultural traditions.

Coming Of Age In Samoa:
   - In the foreword to Coming of Age in Samoa, Mead's advisor, Franz Boas, wrote of its significance:
     Courtesy, modesty, good manners, conformity to definite ethical standards are universal, but what constitutes courtesy, modesty, very good manners, and definite ethical standards is not universal. It is instructive to know that standards differ in the most unexpected ways.
   - Mead's findings suggested that the community ignores both boys and girls until they are about 15 or 16. Before then, children have no social standing within the community.
   - Mead also found that marriage is regarded as a social and economic arrangement where wealth, rank, and job skills of the husband and wife are taken into consideration.

Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies (1935):
   - Another influential book by Mead was Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies.
   - This became a major cornerstone of the feminist movement, since it claimed that females are dominant in the Tchambuli Lake region of the Sepik basin of Papua New Guinea (in the western Pacific) without causing any special problems.
   - The lack of male dominance may have been the result of the Australian administration's outlawing of warfare. According to contemporary research, males are dominant throughout Melanesia (although some believe that female witches have special powers).
E. ARCHAEOLOGY

1. Radiometric Dating

- Radiometric dating is a method of establishing how old something is – perhaps a wooden artefact, a rock, or a fossil – based on the presence of a radioactive isotope within it.
- The basic logic behind radiometric dating is that if you compare the presence of a radioactive isotope within a sample to its known abundance on Earth, and its known half-life (its rate of decay), you can calculate the age of the sample.
- Radiometric dating is useful for finding the age of ancient things, because many radioactive materials decay at a slow rate.
- Radioactive atoms are unstable, meaning they decay into “daughter” products. The number of protons or neutrons in the atom changes, leading to a different isotope or element. The time it takes for one half of the atoms to have decayed is referred to as a “half-life”.
- We know the half-lives of the radioactive isotopes found on Earth, and so we can trace how long a radioactive material within an object has been decaying for, and therefore how long (within a range of error) it’s been since the object was formed.
- Some radioactive materials decay into daughter products that are also radioactive, and have their own half-life: the result is called a “decay-chain”, which eventually decays into a non-radioactive substance.

Reference:
https://cosmosmagazine.com/earth/earth-sciences/what-is-radiometric-dating/
2. Bronze Age Treasures

Context: Archaeologists from the Administration for Cultural Development have excavated a large treasure deposit of Bronze Age artefacts in the forests near the town of Alingsås in Sweden.

Highlights:

- According to the Cultural Environment Act of Sweden, archaeological finds associated with an ancient monument or made from gold, silver, copper, or bronze, or consists of two or more associated objects must be declared to the state.
- The initial discovery consisted of several necklaces, chains, and bronze needles, that archaeologists speculate was displaced by animals digging into cavities between the boulders.
- Ritualistic items not deposited as part of a burial are generally placed near sacred sites such as springs, rivers, or lakes, but the placing of items in a forest setting is certainly unusual.
- Excavations revealed around 50 bronze objects in varying degrees of preservation, in addition to 20 indeterminate bronze items and 10 iron fragments that date from between 750 and 500 BC.
- The majority of the finds consist of decorative objects such as necklaces, bracelets, foot rings, a buckle, and large needles and hoops that were used to decorate and hold up various forms of clothing.
- Most of the finds are made up of bronze items that can be associated with a woman of high status from the Bronze Age.
- The team also excavated residual products from bronze casting, a rod, and horse spurs, which along with the wider assemblage of finds have been sent away for preservation.

Reference:
UPSC Previous year questions based on today’s concept:
1. Describe the Principles of Radiocarbon Dating. Mention its limitations  
   (15 Marks - 2018)
2. Critically examine that the structure and content of language are influenced by culture  
   (15 Marks - 2018)

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. Polyandry in India.  
   (15 Marks)
2. Explain different radio active techniques of dating fossils.  
   (20 Marks)