ANTHROPOLOGY NEWS DIARY

(AND)

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FOR UPSC CSE MAINS

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. Odisha Tribes
      Context:

       ● The administration had initiated a door-to-door survey in the Niyamgiri hills and its villages specifically falling under the Kalyansinghpur block following reports of tribe members affected by Covid-19.
       ● The first cases of coronavirus infection have been reported among the Dongria Kondh tribe, settled in the Niyamgiri hills of Rayagada district in Odisha.

Dongria Kondh Tribe:

       ● The Niyamgiri hill range in Odisha state, eastern India, is home to the Dongria Kondh tribe.
       ● Niyamgiri is an area of densely forested hills, deep gorges and cascading streams.
       ● To be a Dongria Kondh is to farm the hills’ fertile slopes, harvest their produce, and worship the mountain god Niyam Raja and the hills he presides over, including the 4,000 metre Mountain of the Law, Niyam Dongar.
       ● Yet for a decade, the 8,000-plus Dongria Kondh lived under the threat of mining by Vedanta Resources, which hoped to extract the estimated $2billion-worth of bauxite that lies under the surface of the hills.
       ● The deep reverence that the Dongria have for their gods, hills and streams pervades every aspect of their lives.
       ● Even their art reflects the mountains, in the triangular designs found on village shrines to the many gods of the village, farm and forests and their leader, Niyam Raja.
       ● They derive their name from dongar, meaning ‘hill’ and the name for themselves is Jharnia: protector of streams.
       ● They believe that their right to cultivate Niyamgiri’s slopes has been conferred on them by Niyam Raja, and that they are his royal descendants.
       ● They have expert knowledge of their forests and the plants and wildlife they hold. From the forests they gather wild foods such as wild mango, pineapple, jackfruit, and honey.
       ● Rare medicinal herbs are also found in abundance, which the Dongria use to treat a range of ailments including arthritis, dysentery, bone fractures, malaria and snake bites.
Reference:

2. Awa People

Context:
● Marginalized communities nationwide are facing the affects of climate change more than anyone else.
● One of the world’s most endangered Indigenous tribes and one of the last few uncontacted peoples, Brazil’s Awa tribe, is heavily threatened by climate change, and the dangerous effects of human activity.

Highlights:
● The Awá tribe, also known as the Guajá or Awá-Guajá, lives deep within the Amazon rainforest.
● But in approximately 1800, around the same time as the arrival of the European colonizers, the tribe learned to adopt a nomadic lifestyle in order to avoid European incursions in the jungle.
● From a young age, children within the tribe learn to hunt with handmade bows and arrows.
● Members of the group live with their extended families, and embark on gathering trips, as well as hunting trips together — for several weeks they leave their group base and live in temporary shelters made from palm leaves.
● The tribe is also no stranger to handmade craftsmanship, as they make their own tools from branches and rocks, torches from tree resin, and hammocks from palm tree fibers.
● The Awá live in extended family groups that embark upon gathering trips together to collect nuts and berries. Meanwhile, the Awá also go on extended family hunts that can last several weeks.
● During these extended trips away from their group base, they sleep in makeshift shelters made from palm leaves and build their own torches out of tree resin.
B. SOCIO - CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

1. Marriage Traditions around the world

India
- Rather than wearing hand jewelry, in India it's traditional for the bride to wear the “Mehndi”, paint made from henna, intricately painted on her.
- Interestingly enough, mehndi is actually painted onto the bride for its medicinal properties.
- It's meant to help calm the bride while dealing with the stress of the wedding day.

Cuba
- Every man who dances with the bride is traditionally required to pin money on her dress.
- This custom is practiced to help the happy couple pay for the wedding and the honeymoon.

Germany
- While still wearing their wedding attire, German Newlyweds saw a log in half while all their guests watched on in a tradition known as Baumstamm Sägen.
- Given a two person saw, the tradition is meant to symbolize how the couple will work together as they face obstacles in their marriage.

Reference:

2. Hindutva
- The word Hindutva is morphologically of Sanskrit but was never used in that language by anyone. It is a very modern Sanskritised neologism, formed by suffixing -tva (denoting quality of) to the borrowed Hindi noun “hindu”.
- The word “hindu” is a Persian borrowing, a reflex of Old Persian hi(n)duš as attested in the Achaemenid inscriptions, which is in turn a likely borrowing from Sanskrit sindhuḥ. Therefore, the word “hindutva” literally implies “hinduness”.
- Like the word, Hindutva is a relatively modern movement with pretensions of classical vintage.
- There is a kernel of the Hindu reformist thought that goes back to the Maratha state, that in turn owes some debt to the Bhakti Movement of the 14th-17th centuries.
- The Bhakti movement was a proto-Reformation of Hinduism strengthening its hold in the masses and anti-Caste as many of the Bhakti ideologues were non-Brahmins opposed to old Hindu orthodoxy.
- The overall result of the movement was to strengthen the devotional, personal-God aspect of Hinduism, popularisation of epic narratives (Ramayana, Mahabharata, Hanuman Chalisa,
etc) and a departure from the norm that authorities on local religious thought/philosophy had to be Brahmin born.

- Bhakti movement had an aspect of competition with Islam, in trying to absorb it within a broader Indic tradition (cf. Sikhism).
- It also had a proselytising role in converting heterodox (“pagan”) peoples to Hinduism (cf. conversions to gauḍīya vaiśnavism in Bengal, Tripura, Hinduisation of Gorkhas, Axom, etc).
- A significant part of what we know of Hinduism today is a result of the Bhakti reform that happened right under the noses of the Mughals.
- The generation of upper-middle class Westernised elite which arose among Hindus in the half century between the Indian Sepoy Mutiny and the beginning of the 20th century were a reformed (and deracinated) subject people.

Reference:
https://scroll.in/global/994524/hindutva-is-the-woke-culture-of-india

B. Ghotul System

Context:
Unmarried Men And Women Of The Muria Tribe Of India Live Together And Choose Their Sexual Partners.

Highlights:
- In a world where monogamy is of prime importance, Gond and Muria tribes of Chhattisgarh engage in sexual relations with multiple partners before marriage.
- This system of tribes is called the Ghotul system, wherein men and women change their partners regularly in a Ghotul. These people have much more liberty over their lives and bodies in this respect.
- A Ghotul is like a common dormitory for both boys and girls which they start entering at the age of 10. The Ghotul is either one large hut or a group of huts made of wooden or earthly materials.
- They are mostly concentrated in the Bastar region of Chhattisgarh but these tribes and their practices spread to Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh as well.
- Gond and Muria tribes are the only ones that engage in this system. Out of the two, the Muria tribe is the one that engages extensively till date in this practice.
- Under this system, boys and girls share the same living space and continuously change their sexual partners. In fact, if you engage with someone for more than 3 days it is actually frowned upon. The Ghotul system is crucial both socially and religiously.
- The logic is to teach the young adult community about love and also help them overcome feelings of jealousy and possessiveness. Rather than reinforcing the concept of self-love and individualism, they propagate community love and respect.
● The Ghotul teaches cleanliness in the shared living space, discipline and even community service.
● They even have elders or leaders who look over young adults and ensure they are following the practice with full honesty and spirit.
● The female leader is called Belosa and the male leader is called Siredar.

Reference:

UPSC Previous year questions based on today’s concept:
1. Describe the problems of Universal Definitions Of Marriage. (LQ - 1991)
2. Describe Anthropological Approaches to the study of Religion (LQ - 2006)

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. Youth dormitories (20 Marks)
2. Ways of acquiring mates among Indian tribes (20 Marks)