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. BIOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

1. Neanderthal & Early Modern Human Culture

Context:
Neanderthal and Early Modern Human Culture Co-existed Alongside Older Traditions for Over 100,000 Years

Highlights:

- Research from the University of Kent’s School of Anthropology and Conservation has discovered that one of the earliest stone tool cultures, known as the Acheulean, likely persisted for tens of thousands of years longer than previously thought.
- The Acheulean was estimated to have died out around 200,000 years ago but the new findings suggest it may have persisted for much longer, creating over 100,000 years of overlap with more advanced technologies produced by Neanderthals and early modern humans.
- Using statistical techniques new to archaeological science, the archaeologists and conservation experts were able to reconstruct the end of the Acheulean period and re-map the archaeological record.
- Previously, a more rapid shift between the earlier Acheulean stone tool designs often associated with *Homo heidelbergensis* – the common ancestor of modern humans and Neanderthals – and more advanced ‘Levallois’ technologies created by early modern humans and Neanderthals, was assumed. However, the study has shed new light on the transition between these two technologies, suggesting substantial overlap between the two.
- Acheulean stone tool technologies are the longest-lived cultural tradition practiced by early humans. Originating in East Africa 1.75 million years ago, handaxes and cleavers – the stone tool types which characterize the period – went on to be used across Africa, Europe, and Asia by several different species of early humans. Prior to this discovery, it was widely assumed that the Acheulean period ended between 300-150,000 years ago. However, the record was lacking in specific dates, and the timing of its demise has been heavily debated.
- The Kent and Czech team discovered that the tradition likely ended at different times around the world, varying from as early as 170,000 years ago in Sub-Saharan Africa through to as late as 57,000 years ago in Asia.
- To understand when the Acheulean ended, the team collected information on different archaeological sites from around the world to find the latest known stone tool assemblages. A statistical technique known as optimal linear estimation – commonly used in conservation studies to estimate species extinctions – was used to predict how much longer the stone tool tradition continued after the most recent known sites.
- In effect, the technique was able to model the portion of the archaeological record yet to be discovered.
2. Brain Cells

Context:
Neurons, nerve cells in the brain, are central players in brain function. However, a key role for glia, long considered support cells, is emerging. A research group has now discovered two new types of glial cells in the brain, by unleashing adult stem cells from their quiescent state. These new types of glia may play an important role in brain plasticity and repair.

Highlights:
● The brain is malleable well into adulthood. Brain plasticity is not only due to the formation of new nerve connections.
● Stem cells present in the adult brain also generate new nerve cells. For more than a hundred years, scientists have concentrated on investigating different types of nerve cells.
● In the brain, however, another class of cells, called glia, are also essential for brain function.
● However, the importance of glial cells has been underestimated for decades. How many types of glia there are, how they develop and what roles they play are all still largely unexplored.
● In their study in the journal Science, Doetsch’s team identified a molecular signal that awakened the stem cells from their quiescent state, allowing them to uncover multiple domains that give rise to glial cells in this stem cell reservoir.
● The research team also found that both glial cell types were activated in a model of demyelination. These new glial cell types may therefore be a source of cells for repair in neurodegenerative diseases, such as multiple sclerosis or after injury.

Reference:
https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2021/06/210614110816.htm
3. Epidemiology - Irish Potato Famine

Context:
Researchers tracking the evolution of different strains of the plant pathogen that caused the Irish potato famine in the 1840s show that the historic lineage called FAM-1 was found in nearly three-fourths of the 140 historic and modern samples tested and was found on all six continents.

Highlights:
- NC State plant pathologists studied the genomes of about 140 pathogen samples -- historic and modern -- from 37 countries on six continents to track the evolution of differing strains of Phytophthora infestans, a major cause of late-blight disease on potato and tomato plants.
- The study, published in Scientific Reports, shows that the historic lineage called FAM-1 was found in nearly three-fourths of the samples (73%) and was found on all six continents.
- FAM-1 was much more widespread than previously assumed, spreading from Europe to Asia and Africa along British colony trade routes.
- FAM-1 caused outbreaks of potato late blight in the United States in 1843 and then two years later in Great Britain and Ireland. It was also found in historic samples from Colombia -- suggesting a South American origin. FAM-1 caused massive and debilitating late-blight disease outbreaks in Europe, leaving starvation and migration in its wake.
- The study also suggests that the pathogen spread first in potatoes and then later jumped into tomatoes. Spread of the pathogen in ripe tomatoes in ships' holds would have been unlikely.

Reference:
https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2021/06/210614110832.htm

B. TRIBAL AFFAIRS
1. Tribes & Land

Context:
Uncontacted tribes thrive when their lands are protected. They frequently indicate – by pointing arrows up at passing planes, leaving crossed spears in the forest, and more – that they do not want contact.

Highlights:
- Experts claimed that uncontacted people should be contacted for their own benefit, ignoring centuries of experience of the devastation forced contact inflicts.
- Disease and violence have wiped out whole tribes soon after first contact, and reduced others to just a few survivors. The academics state that “a well-designed contact can be quite safe,” but the examples of contact they choose to illustrate their point were in fact catastrophic, and left many of the tribes people dead.
- Forced contact missions were official policy in Brazil for decades but led to the decimation of countless tribes.
● It was this devastation that led Brazil’s indigenous affairs department FUNAI to adopt, in the late 1980s, its policy of protecting uncontacted tribes’ land rather than forcing contact upon them. Professors Hill and Walker also argue that the existence of isolated peoples is "not viable in the long term.”
● But, in fact, there are more than one hundred uncontacted tribes around the world, and where their lands are protected, they are thriving.
● Indigenous peoples, organizations and experts around the world, including Brazil’s indigenous affairs department, FUNAI, have attacked the academics’ ideas as being “arrogant,” “dangerous,” and “genocidal.”
● The key to stopping the annihilation of tribal peoples is protecting their land rights – which are enshrined in national and international law. All uncontacted tribal peoples face catastrophe unless their lands are protected. Survival is doing everything we can to secure their land for them, and to give them the chance to determine their own futures.

Reference:
https://www.survivalinternational.org/about/forcedcontact

2. Covid - free tribes in Karnataka

Context:
Over 100 families in Karnataka tribal settlement COVID-free since outbreak of pandemic

Highlights:
● The Diddalli tribal settlement in Chennayanakote Gram Panchayat limits has been COVID-free since the outbreak of the pandemic. The tribals have been successful in keeping the virus spread at bay after following stringent COVID norms.
● Since the outbreak of the pandemic, especially during this second wave, they have not stepped out of the settlement much.
● Many tribes have been rendered jobless in the process, yet, are managing their needs with the help of a few donors.
● Many tribes have not been able to earn a livelihood since March this year, but they state that health is more important than earning.
● Further, following the efforts of the tribal leader, the over 100 families in the settlement have availed food kits from various donors and are managing their daily needs.
● When any resident in the settlement develops mild symptoms of cold, they take precautions and prepare home medicines using forest resources. They follow a healthy diet to ensure good health.
● Meanwhile, the tribals have been made aware of the threats to children’s health in the coming third wave and kids in the settlement have been restricted from heading out of the settlement.
Reference:

UPSC Previous year questions based on today’s concept:
1. Tribes & Land Alienation (15 Marks - 1998)
2. The theme of Epidemiological Anthropology (10 Marks - 2008)

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. Tribal land alienation 20 Marks