ANTHROPOLOGY NEWS DIARY

02.08.2021

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

Context:
Superintendent of Police Dr Sangram Patil, who left behind his medical career to join the civil services, has used his medical prowess to help the members of the Gotti Koya tribal community gain better access to healthcare.

Highlights:
- In 2015, Dr. Sangam Patil became an IPS officer and took charge as Superintendent of Police in Mulugu and Jayashankar-Bhupalpally districts of Telangana. However, little did he know that his expertise in medicine, combined with his position as an officer, would help him cater to the health needs of tribals, who had otherwise not accessed medical care for years.
- Since 2019, Dr Sangram has helped over 5,000 Gotti Koya tribals from 100-odd hamlets in the district, address various complaints including those of nutrition deficiency, haemoglobin, skin, and other related ailments.
- With the help of this officer, medicinal help worth Rs 7 lakh has reached the tribals so far.
- Dr Sangram says the initiative to help the tribal community began after he noticed poor health conditions and a lack of medical support in the area.
- As a part of routine patrolling, police officials are required to move around these remote parts of the district. The agency areas where these vulnerable communities live are non-accessible by vehicles and sometimes require walking for miles.
- He roped in doctors from the Indian Medical Association, Warangal and health officers from the government district hospital and health centre for the cause. Along with Dr Sangram, around 20 such doctors systematically reached out to hamlets.
- The funds for the initiative come from government provisions and other donations such as CSR.
- Besides addressing health issues in these tribal hamlets, efforts are also on to bring students into mainstream education.

Reference:

2. Tribal hamlets in Idukki

- Tribal councils (Oorukoottom) at times land in controversy since they hand out punishments such as social boycott (Ooruvilakku) to families for violating the norms of the community.
- However, a decision by the tribal council in Edamalakkudy, the only tribal grama panchayat in Kerala, has drawn attention since it has managed to keep COVID-19 at bay.
- When the pandemic broke out last year, the tribal council decided that outsiders would not be allowed to enter the hamlet. The residents too were asked not to leave the hamlet. No case has been reported from the grama panchayat till date.
- Emulating Edamalakkudy, other tribal hamlets in the district too have decided to ban outsiders.
- Hamlets under the forest division decided on Sunday to bar outsiders.
● An outbreak will go out of hand in tribal settlements due to their community living and high social interaction.

Reference:

3. Tribes & Forlorn Lives

● zen-odd members of the Suprikat tribal colony in Thottappally forest region in Chaliyar panchayat are living in tarpaulin sheds.
● They said they rarely get food kits from the government. Two of the three families do not have a ration card. They have no land of their own either. “We have been living here for many years,” said tribal leader Mathan.
● With no proper road, one will have to trek seven km to reach this tiny hamlet. They have no power connection. Although the Kerala State Electricity Board (KSEB) installed power lines up to the hamlet, no connection was given to them so far. The power line broken in the 2018 floods remained un repaired.
● Although Integrated Tribal Development Project (ITDP)’s tribal promoter in charge of this hamlet Sheela Vinu said that she used to visit them and take care of them regularly, they denied her claim.
● The children seemed totally unaware about the classes and reopening of the schools.
● The ITDP had offered funds to set up a study centre for the tribal families, and that was why none else took any initiative.
● Neglected by the authorities, the tribal families are allegedly exploited by some traders whom they depend for their groceries. They said that the traders were overcharging them for their groceries.

Reference:

4. Pardhi Tribes

● Launched in October 2018, the ‘Walk With the Pardhis’ initiative in the Panna Tiger Reserve, takes tourists for a tour in the deep jungles by Pardhi nature guides who are trained by the non-profit Last Wilderness Foundation, with active support and encouragement by the forest department. Young members of the erstwhile hunting community are now protectors of the forests and wildlife.
● Pardhi, derived from the Marathi word ‘paradh’, means hunting. Traditionally, they are nomadic hunter-gatherers and experts in using bows and arrows and setting traps for animals.
● When they rose against the British, they were branded as a tribe of ‘criminals’ under the Criminal Tribes Act in 1871. It was only as late as 1952 that the tribe was denotified by the Indian government. But, its members continue to be marginalised and face discrimination. The ‘criminal’ tag refuses to go away.
● Pardhis who have lived close to nature for hundreds of years and have mastered the art of imitating bird and animal calls, can easily recognise pugmarks of animals and identify every
blade of leaf in the forests. Members of the community are using this traditional knowledge to give tourists an in-depth introduction to the forests of Panna.

- The Pardhis continued to hunt till 2008-09 when the tiger population at the Panna Tiger Reserve and the nearby forests came close to extinction.
- Since then there has been a transformation in the community’s lifestyle, which, rather than hunting, is now protecting the wildlife and educating visitors about the jungles. The forest department on its part has proactively provided them with habitation at Gandhigram village and made arrangements for the education of the children.

Reference:

B. BIOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

1. Great Apes & Australopithecines
- A research team measured the rate of blood flow to the cognitive part of the brain, based on the size of the holes in the skull that passed the supply arteries.
- The research team calibrated this technique in humans and other mammals and then applied it to 96 great ape skulls and 11 Australopithecus fossil skulls.
- The study revealed a higher rate of blood flow to the cognitive part of the brain of living great apes compared to Australopithecus.
- The results were unexpected by anthropologists because it has been generally assumed that intelligence is directly related to the size of the brain.
- At first, brain size seems reasonable because it is a measure of the number of neurons. On second thought, however, cognition relies not only on the number of neurons, but also on the number of connections between them, called synapses.
- The human brain uses 70% of its energy on synaptic activity, and that amount of energy relies on a proportionately high blood supply to deliver oxygen.
- Although our brain occupies only 2% of our body weight, it uses 15-20% of our energy and requires about 15% of the blood from the heart.
- However, the study shows that cerebral blood flow rate of human ancestors falls well below the data derived from modern, non-human primates.

Reference:

UPSC Previous year questions based on today’s concept:

1. Education & Health among Tribal Women (15 Marks - 2010)
2. Explain the contributions of tribal cultures to Indian Civilization. (20 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. Australopithecines 20 Marks