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.
INDEX

A. TRIBAL AFFAIRS

1. Van Dhan Promotions..............................................................................................................03
2. Van Gujjar Community.............................................................................................................03
3. Amhara Tribe..........................................................................................................................04
4. Uncontacted/ Isolated Tribes....................................................................................................06

B. SOCIO - CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

1. UN & Racism..........................................................................................................................07

UPSC ANTHROPOLOGY PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTIONS................................................................08
PRACTICE QUESTIONS FOR PEER REVIEW..............................................................................08

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

1. Van Dhan Promotions

- Among the various initiatives, which have helped in alleviating the economic distress of the tribals, are the Van Dhan tribal start-ups and the Mechanism for Marketing of Minor Forest Produce (MFP) Through Minimum Support Price (MSP) & Development of Value Chain for MFP’ Scheme that provides MSP to gatherers of forest produces and introduce value addition and marketing through tribal groups and clusters. These programmes have gained widespread acceptance across the country. In particular, the Van Dhan tribal start-ups, especially, have been very successful.

- In less than 18 months, 37259 Van Dhan Vikas Kendras (VDVKs), subsumed into 2224 Van Dhan Vikas Kendra Clusters (VDVKCs) of 300 forest dwellers each, have been sanctioned by TRIFED as of date.

- A typical Van Dhan Vikas Kendra includes 20 tribal members. 15 such Van Dhan Vikas Kendras form 1 Van Dhan Vikas Kendra cluster.

- The Van Dhan Vikas Kendra Clusters will provide the Van Dhan Vikas Kendras economies of scale, livelihood and market-linkages, as well as entrepreneurship opportunities to nearly 6.67 lakh Tribal forest gatherers in 23 states and 2 UTs.

- 50 lakh tribals have been impacted by the Van Dhan start-ups programme up until now.

- The products that are being processed and value-added by the tribals in this VDK cluster are herbal hair oil, Malabar tamarind, and honey.

- Under the leadership of Smt Neema Srinivas, their champion entrepreneur, the tribals handed over packaged bottles of herbal hair oil to TRIFED officials. This product will soon be sold via TRIFED’s extensive network of Tribes India retail outlets and TribesIndia.com.

- Tribals at the newly operational Vanasiri Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Vikas Kendra Cluster at Kote, Mysore have been processing and packaging wild honey in Glass Bottles which will soon be sold by TRIFED. Other processed products include tamarind at this VDKC.

- It is hoped that in the coming days more and more success stories arising from the Van Dhan Yojana initiative which fosters Vocal For Local and an Atmanirbhar Bharat will come to the fore and also lead to optimising the income and livelihoods of tribal people and finally a transformation of their lives.

Reference:

2. Van Gujjar Community

- It is one of the few forest-dwelling nomadic communities in the country

- Usually, they migrate to the bugyals (grasslands) located in the upper Himalayas with their buffaloes and return only at the end of monsoons to their makeshift huts, deras, in the foothills.

- They inhabit the foothills of Himalayan states like Himachal Pradesh, Uttrakhand.
● They traditionally practice buffalo husbandry; a family owns up to 25 heads of buffaloes.
● They rely on buffaloes for milk, which gets them a good price in Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh markets.
● The Van Gurjars follow Islam, and they have their own clans, similar to the Hindu Gotras.
● They are a pastoral semi-nomadic community, practising transhumance,
● In the winter season, the Van Gurjars migrate with their herds to the Shivalik foothills, and in summer, they migrate to pastures high up in the mountains.
● The Van Gurjars have had conflicts with the forest authorities, who prohibited human and livestock populations inside a reserved park, and blamed the Van Gurjar community for poaching and timber smuggling.
● After the creation of the Rajaji National Park (RNP), the Van Gurjars in Dehradun were asked to shift to a resettlement colony at Pathri near Haridwar.

Reference:
https://www.google.co.in/amp/s/m.timesofindia.com/city/dehradun/uttarakhand-forms-panel-to-address-problems-faced-by-van-gujjar-community/amp_articleshow/82167677.cms

3. Amhara Tribe
● The Amhara are the politically and culturally dominant ethnic group of Ethiopia. They are located primarily in the central highland plateau of Ethiopia.
● In terms of the total Ethiopian population, however, the Amhara are a numerical minority. The national population has usually been placed at between 14 and 22 million.
● It is generally estimated that the Amhara, together with the closely related Tigre, constitute about one-third of this total population. One of the most recent estimates gives the number of native speakers of Amharic, the language of the Amhara, as approximately 7,800,000.
● Their national clothes are basically white, whether the shawls and light blankets worn over the shoulders by the men or the white dresses and wraps worn by the ladies.
Life in the Amhara farming society is hard. Many Amhara live in the harsh and stark mountains, easy to defend, but making it difficult to travel and gain provisions.

The men in the fields, the women around the house and the children at home and watching the sheep—all work very hard.

The fields are plowed with oxen, seeds are sown and harvested by hand, and the harvest is threshed by the feet of animals. In the home, the primary cooking fuel is the dried dung of the farm animals. Nothing is wasted.

The staple food of the Amhara is injera be wot. Injera is made from a tiny indigenous grain called teff (tyeff in Amharic), which is endemic to Ethiopia. Wot is a pepper sauce that can be made from beans or meat. The whole process of making these foods is difficult and time-consuming. Impure drinking water and deforestation are significant issues in Amhara life.

The children from the age of five or six spend their days watching the family animals, mainly sheep. Increasingly, children are able to attend public schools, though this is mainly for only half a day since the schools are very crowded. Only a little over 10 percent of the population has access to an all-weather road.

Settlements are typically built on or near hilltops, as protection against flooding. Farms are terraced on the hillsides to prevent erosion and hold water for crops.

The “hamlet” is usually patrilineal, with sons building their homes in the father’s location. Girls normally marry at age 14, and the groom is three to five years older.

Most marriages are negotiated by the two families, with a civil ceremony sealing the contract. A priest may be present. Divorce is allowed and must also be negotiated. There is also a “temporary marriage,” by oral contract before witnesses.

The woman is paid housekeeper’s wages, and is not eligible for inheritance, but children of the marriage are legally recognized and qualify for inheritance. Priests may marry but are not eligible for divorce or remarriage.

Reference:
https://www.atlasofhumanity.com/amhara
4. Uncontacted / Isolated tribes

- Uncontacted people are communities or groups of indigenous people living without sustained contact to neighbouring communities and the world.
- They could be called indigenous people in voluntary isolation.
- In 2013 there were thought to be roughly 100 uncontacted tribes worldwide.
- Knowledge of uncontacted people comes mostly from encounters with neighbouring indigenous communities and from aerial footage.
- They have also been called "people in initial contact", "hidden people", "uncontacted tribes", or, incorrectly, "lost tribes".
- Recognizing the myriad problems with contact, the United Nations Human Rights Council in 2009 and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in 2013 introduced guidelines and recommendations along with a right to self-isolation.
- The Sentinelese people of North Sentinel Island, which lies near South Andaman Island in the Bay of Bengal, reject contact.
- Attempts to contact them have usually been rebuffed, sometimes with lethal force.
- Their language is markedly different from other languages on the Andamans, which suggests that they have been isolated for thousands of years.
- Another Andamanese tribe, the Jarawas, live on the main islands, largely isolated from other peoples. They are thought to number a few hundred people.
- They have been called by experts the most isolated people in the world, and they are likely to remain so.
- However, some individuals have repeatedly attempted to intrude upon them, although such attempts are against the law.
- In November 2018, American missionary John Allen Chau was killed by the Sentinelese during an illegal expedition to the island.
- There are over 40 uncontacted tribes living in West Papua region in Indonesia although contact is usually established upon their initial encounter.
- It is illegal for journalists and other organizations to enter West Papua, yet there is no dedicated government agency for the protection of isolated indigenous groups.
- The Angu or Änga people, are a small and previously violent group living mainly in the high, mountainous region of Papua New Guinea.
- Even though they are short people, often less than 5 feet, they were feared for their violent raids on more peaceful villages living in lower valleys.
- A film by Jean Pierre purports to show first contact between a group of Toulambi, reportedly a part of the Angu People, and white people in December 1993.

Reference:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uncontacted_peoples
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Angu
B. SOCIO - CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

1. Racism

Context:

- The United Nations Human Rights Council recently adopted a milestone UN resolution to create an independent mechanism to investigate the root causes of systemic racism and police violence.
- The independent experts are responsible for examining systemic racism, in particular in law enforcement, as well as government responses to peaceful anti-racism protests, discriminatory policing, and other human rights violations against Africans and people of African descent around the globe.

Black Lives Matter

- Black Lives Matter (BLM) is a political and social movement protesting against incidents of police brutality and all Racially motivated Violence against Black People.
- In the year 2020, there was a raging outbreak of protests under the BLM slogan, following the murder of George Floyd, a black security officer by Minneapolis cop.

Racism

- Racism is a belief that humans may be divided into separate and exclusive biological entities called “races”; that there is a causal link between inherited physical traits and traits of personality, intellect, morality, and other cultural and behavioral features; and that some races are innately superior to others.
- Racism is a prejudice, discrimination exhibited by a large group of people against people from different race or ethnicity, due to differences in their physical appearances. Apartheid which was practised in South Africa is an example of racism.
- In the biological and social sciences, the consensus is clear: race is a social construct, not a biological attribute. Today, scientists prefer to use the term “ancestry” to describe human diversity. “Ancestry” reflects the fact that human variations do have a connection to the Geographical origins of our ancestors—with enough information about a person’s DNA, scientists can make a reasonable interpretation of their ancestry.
- We as a species have been estimated to share 99.9% of our DNA with each other. The few differences that do exist reflect differences in environments and external factors, not core biology.
- Importantly, the evolution of skin color occurred independently, and did not influence other traits such as mental abilities and behavior. In fact, science has yet to find evidence that there are genetic differences in intelligence between populations. Ultimately, while there certainly are some biological differences between different populations, these differences are few and superficial. The traits that we do share are far more profound.

Reference:
UPSC Previous year questions based on today’s concept:

1. Tribes as a colonial construct (10 Marks - 2016)
2. Race & Racism (S.N. - 2004)

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. Race and Racism in current times. (20 Marks)