ANTHROPOLOGY NEWS DIARY

(AND)

04.09.2021

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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**UPSC ANTHROPOLOGY PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTIONS**

**PRACTICE QUESTIONS FOR PEER REVIEW**

*Note - For convenience, the respective reference links have been dropped at the end of every topic.*
A. BIOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

1. Chinese Evolutionary Theories
   - A recent study led by Chinese scientists has shed new light on the origin and evolution of human language and tool use.
   - Compared with existing non-human primates such as monkeys and apes, humans have significant advantages in many superior cognitive functions, especially the ability to use language and complex tools.
   - The study is expected to help explain the longstanding mystery of human origin by comparing the differences and similarities between humans and other non-human primates in brain structure and function.
   - However, since it is difficult to confirm the homology of functional brain areas between different species, there is still a lack of reliable technical means to conduct cross-species studies on the evolution of brain structure and function.
   - Using structural and diffusion magnetic resonance imaging, the researchers analyzed the structural asymmetry of the inferior parietal lobule, a brain structure most relevant to language and tool use, among three primates: human, chimpanzee, and macaque.
   - The results showed that the asymmetry of brain structure and its anatomical connectivity pattern is the inherent biological basis that drives the evolution of language and tool use.

Reference:

2. Fossils & Origin
   - Turner, a professor at Canada’s Laurentian University Harquail School of Earth Sciences, found evidence of sponges in the 890-million-year-old reefs. She presented evidence of tube-shaped structures made out of calcite crystals.
   - The nature of the material is familiar from the bodies of much younger body fossils of sponges.
   - There is very little fossil evidence of sponges before the Cambrian period, 540 million years ago.
   - If the findings are proved to be true, the sponges would have lived 90 million years before the "Neoproterozoic event" during which scientists believe large amounts of oxygen increased in the atmosphere, giving way to animal life.
   - The earliest animals appeared before that event and may have been tolerant of comparatively low oxygen levels, relative to modern conditions.
   - Research of modern sponges has proven that they can survive with low amounts of oxygen.
   - The earliest animals to emerge evolutionarily were probably sponge-like.
Scientists think life on Earth started about 3.7 billion years ago, but they thought animals came into the picture a lot later.

Reference:

3. Climate & Human Body Shape

Researchers studied 300 human fossils of the Homo genus and combined it with climate models to identify its role in human evolution.

How humans came into being, evolved and reached the modern era has been a subject of interest for both scientists and non-scientists alike. One way to observe evolution is to see the changes in body size and structure over millions of years.

The study stated that various hypotheses indicate the role of environmental, demographic, social, dietary, and technological factors behind human evolution.

The researchers identified temperature as a major predictor of body size variation in *Homo Sapiens* in the last one million years. Researchers determined what temperature, precipitation and climate conditions the fossils might have been subjected to during their time when they were alive.

Throughout the past four million years, human evolution is broadly characterised by a trend of increasing body mass and structure, with an even greater relative increase in brain size, associated with changes in behaviour, diet, and demographic expansion.

To establish climate’s influence, researchers considered long-term, glacial-interglacial climate variations caused by changes in the Earth’s orbit around the Sun and greenhouse gases emissions, such as carbon dioxide.

They found larger body weight in colder environments and a smaller body weight in warmer environments. The observations are consistent with those seen in animals like bears that live in the frigid conditions.

Researchers found a relationship with long-term rainfall variability, where brain size was found to decrease with increasing levels of long-term rainfall.

However, the analyses detected no such association of temperature with brain size, suggesting that brain size in *Homo Sapiens* was less influenced by environmental variables than body size during the past one million years.

Reference:
B. TRIBAL AFFAIRS

1. Meena Tribe
   Context:
   Members of the Meena community say the Amargarh Fort was built by a Meena ruler predating Rajput rule in Jaipur, and has been their holy site for centuries.
   - The Meena is a tribe found mainly in the Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh regions of India.
   - The Mina are possibly of inner Asiatic origin, and tradition suggests that they migrated to India in the 7th century with the Rājputs, but no other link between the two has been substantiated.
   - In the 11th century, the Meo branch of the Mina tribe converted from Hinduism to Islām, but they retained Hindu dress. Originally a nomadic, warlike people practicing animal breeding and known for lawlessness, today most Mina and Meo are farmers with respected social positions.
   - Lack of education, illiteracy and lack of access to proper facilities keep the Meena under the clutches of several illnesses.
   - The Meena tribe is believed to be a mixture of more than one tribe. It seems the fishermen community called Meenavar eventually became Meena.
   - They do not intermarry with other tribes. The younger brother of a deceased can marry his widow. It is said that a married man has freedom and access to his older brother's wife and wife's younger sister.
   - According to the 2001 census, there are 3.8 million Meenas and most of them are in Rajasthan. They are known by the language they speak - Meena.
   - There are not many servants among the Meena people to uplift from the superstitious beliefs and evil practices. Your prayers can make a difference to deliver them from the command of sinful life that they can shine as stars.

   Reference:
   https://www.britannica.com/topic/Mina-South-Asian-people

2. Western Ghats Tribe
   - The ability of the Solega to adapt their own activities to mitigate conflict with wild animals make them ideal partners for conservationists in the fight to preserve local biodiversity, and protect endangered species.
   - The Solega are a small community of around 30,000 people, who traditionally practiced a hunter-gatherer lifestyle, along with small-scale agriculture, and now live in small hamlets all over the BR Hills, from the high-altitude evergreen forest to the lowland scrub forests.
   - Most of the animals in the region are worshiped by the community. The tiger is seen as Lord Madeswara’s animal, Pandeswara is the elephant god, the Gaur belongs to Lord Karappa, and the sambar is the animal of Lord Kadodeya Muttaraya.
   - During the village festival, they even worship the leaves, flowers and fruits collected for the rituals. The Solega community has learnt to live in harmony with the wildlife.
   - Recently, to capture a tiger in the Bandipur-Nagarhole region, the forest officials took help from our community as we are born gifted to talk with nature.
● There is no human-wildlife conflict; it is more of coexistence. There have been, or aggressive interactions — as an elephant raiding their crop, but the community never retaliates with violence. And that is mediated by their religious beliefs.

● There is a lot of sadness in the community about what the forest used to look like, how it is now, and how it has affected the wellbeing of not just their own community but also the wildlife. Lantana overgrowth has caused a lack of many types of grass which are primary food sources for many herbivores including elephants.

Reference:

UPSC Previous year questions based on today’s concept:

1. Tribes & Forests (15 Marks 1999)
2. Sheldon’s Somatotypes (S.N. - 2002)

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. Culture contact of tribes of Western Ghats of India. (20 Marks)