ANTHROPOLOGY NEWS DIARY

(AND)

28.10.2021

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. BIOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

1. Lowering Cortisol
   - An interdisciplinary team has determined that older adult women converse more effectively with strangers than their younger counterparts; additionally, communicating with female friends decreases stress hormone levels for women across the lifespan.
   - A recent study determined key differences in the ways that various age groups communicate, as well as one conversational component that stands the test of time: friendship. Specifically, bonds between individuals who identify as female.
   - An interdisciplinary team evaluated how interlocutors' age and familiarity with one another impacts a conversation, reviewing the interaction's overall effectiveness and stress responses generated as a result.
   - The study, titled "What are friends for? The impact of friendship on communicative efficiency and cortisol response during collaborative problem solving among younger and older women," was published in the Journal of Women and Aging in May 2021.
   - The team also tested the socio-emotional selectivity hypothesis, which postulates a social "pruning" as humans advance in age and pursue more intimate, higher-quality circles of friends.
   - They tested a pool of 32 women: 16 "older adults" aged 62-79, and 16 "younger adults" aged 18-25. Each participant was either paired with a friend (a “familiar” conversation partner) or a stranger ("unfamiliar").
   - The partnerships underwent a series of conversational challenges, wherein the participant instructed her partner to arrange a set of tangrams in an order that only the former could see. The catch - Each shape was abstract, their appearances purposefully difficult to describe.
   - The researchers found that while the younger adult pairs communicated more efficiently with familiar partners than their older counterparts, they communicated less efficiently with unfamiliar partners; alternatively, the older adults demonstrated conversational dexterity, quickly articulating the abstract tangrams to friends and strangers alike.
   - When you experience something stressful, if you have a stress response system that's working as it should, the result is an elevated amount of cortisol, our primary stress hormone, which then tells our bodies to release glucose into our bloodstreams. That's reflected in our saliva about 15 to 20 minutes after we experience it. If we see a rise in salivary cortisol from an individual's baseline levels, that indicates that they are more stressed than they were at the time of the earlier measurements.
   - A lot of the research on the tend-and-befriend hypothesis has only focused on young women, so it's great to have these results that pull that out to the end of life. We can see that friendship has that same effect throughout the lifespan. Familiar partners and friendship buffer stress, and that's preserved with age.

Reference:
https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2021/06/210630173629.htm

2. Nesher Ramla
   - The Nesher Ramla hominids lived between 420,000 and 120,000 years ago in the Middle East and had a distinctive combination of Neanderthal (especially the teeth and jaws) and archaic Homo (specifically the skull) features; they had fully mastered technology that until only
recently was linked to either *Homo sapiens* or Neanderthals; they were efficient hunters of large and small game, used wood for fuel, cooked or roasted meat, and maintained fires.

- It enables us to make new sense of previously found human fossils, add another piece to the puzzle of human evolution, and understand the migrations of humans in the old world.
- Even though they lived so long ago, in the Late Middle Pleistocene (474,000-130,000 years ago), the Nesher Ramla people can tell us a fascinating tale, revealing a great deal about their descendants’ evolution and way of life.
- The archaeological finds associated with human fossils show that the Nesher Ramla *Homo* possessed advanced stone-tool production technologies and most likely interacted with the local *Homo sapiens*.
- The discovery of the Nesher Ramla *Homo* challenges the prevailing hypothesis that Neanderthals originated in Europe.
- The oldest fossils that show Neanderthal features are found in Western Europe, so researchers generally believe Neanderthals originated there.
- However, migrations of different species from the Middle East into Europe may have provided genetic contributions to the Neanderthal gene pool during the course of their evolution.
- At a later stage, small groups of the Nesher Ramla *Homo* migrated to Europe, where they evolved into the classic Neanderthals that we are familiar with, and also to Asia, where they became archaic populations with Neanderthal-like features.

*Reference:
http://www.sci-news.com/archaeology/nesher-ramla-hominin-09799.html*

3. **Stress & Alzheimer’s**

- Chronic psychosocial stress is increasingly being recognized as a risk factor for sporadic Alzheimer’s disease.
- The HPA axis is the major stress response pathway in the body and tightly regulates the production of cortisol, a glucocorticoid hormone.
- Dysregulation of the HPA axis and increased levels of cortisol are commonly found in Alzheimer’s patients and make a major contribution to the disease process.
- In addition, within the general population there are interindividual differences in sensitivities to glucocorticoid and stress responses, which are thought to be due to a combination of genetic and environmental factors.
- Genetic variations within these pathways can influence the way the brain’s immune system behaves leading to a dysfunctional response.
- In the brain, this leads to a chronic disruption of normal brain processes, increasing the risk of subsequent neurodegeneration and ultimately dementia.

*Reference:
http://www.sci-news.com/medicine/chronic-psychosocial-stress-alzheimers-disease-09792.html*
B. SOCIO - CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY
1. Lakshadweep - Melting Pot of Cultures

- The socio-cultural life in the islands is unique. Though inhabited by a majority of Muslim residents, Islam practiced in the Lakshadweep is unlike that followed anywhere else in the country.

- There is a story that the people in the Lakshadweep Islands came to know of Mahatma Gandhi’s assassination 14 days after it happened.

- Surrounded by the warm waters of the Arabian Sea and lying about 240 miles off the coast of Kerala, the Union Territory of Lakshadweep is politically and historically connected to India, but is also isolated from much of the developments taking place in the Indian mainland.

- The socio-cultural life in the islands is unique. Though inhabited by a majority of Muslim residents, Islam practiced in the Lakshadweep is unlike that followed anywhere else in the country.

- It is a matrilineal society, also influenced by Hindu traditions and caste structure. Further, although the islanders share ethnic, linguistic and cultural links with the Malayalam speaking people of Kerala, there is significant Arabic, Tamil and Kannada influence on Lakshadweep as well.

- The discovery and settlement in the islands is frequently associated with the legend of Cheraman Perumal, the last of the Chera rulers in Kerala who governed the region.

- A popular oral tradition in Kerala suggests that the last Cheraman Perumal had a strange dream following which he converted to Islam and set out to Arabia for the sake of performing the Hajj. But he was to never return from Arabia and he settled and was later buried there.

- When the Raja failed to return to Kerala, a tributary prince, the Raja of Kolattunad (north Malabar), is known to have sent a search party to look for him. This search party, on being caught in a severe storm, was stuck in one of the Lakshadweep islands. According to Lakshadweep’s tradition, these castaways were the first settlers in the islands.

- Apart from the caste system, a pre-Islamic Hindu society in the islands can be deduced from the use of the ancient Malayalam script, Vattelutu in the islands before the use of the Arabic script, the discovery of a number of buried idols, probably of Hindu origins, and the existence of several traditional island songs in praise of Ram and alluding to snake worship.

- What really marks out the Islamic society of Lakshadweep from the rest of India is the long existing tradition of matriliny wherein lineage and property is succeeded from mother to daughter.

- However, the geographical isolation of the Lakshadweep has ensured that the islanders were not subjected to the kind of European colonial influence or the influence of conventional Islamic ideas from other parts of the Muslim world like the reformist Mujahid movement in south-west India in the 1930s. Consequently, unlike that in other parts of the Indian Ocean, the matrilineal tradition in the Lakshadweep has also been most long lasting.

Reference:
https://indianexpress.com/article/research/lakshadweep-an-isolated-island-that-became-a-melting-pot-of-cultures-7341984/
2. Surviving Climate Change

- The Sunderbans is a region rich in biodiversity. Spread over 10,000 square kilometers in two countries—India and Bangladesh—it is the world’s largest contiguous mangrove forest. The area’s mudflats, forests, river islands, channels, and estuaries are home to more than 1,000 species of plants and animals.
- More than 4.5 million people live in the region’s forests, waterways, and islands. Of the 102 islands in India’s side of the Sunderbans, for example, 54 are inhabited and have an average population density of 1,000 people per square kilometer.
- People have been living in the Sunderbans for centuries. In that time, the landscape has always been unstable: rising tides, storms changing coastlines, and silt reshaping the boundaries of water and land.
- Today the Sunderbans’ embankments are frequently breached in the face of 200-kilometer-per-hour winds and rushing water from the river and sea. When these structures break, they are difficult to repair until after waters recede. As a result, during floods, when residents have the greatest need for hospitals and health care, they are marooned, cut off from essential medical infrastructure.
- In addition, the soft silt of the riverbed cannot bear the weight of cinder blocks from wide concrete embankments.
- In addition, residents of the Sunderbans have intergenerational trauma from violent relocations in the past, even before climate change began to force migrations.
- Climate change is going to affect diverse communities across the world. We need to start using bottom-up approaches—start from people, their desires and aspirations, understand their knowledge, and then try to find solutions.

Reference:
https://www.sapiens.org/culture/climate-change-sundarbans/

UPSC Previous year questions based on today’s concept:

1. Microevolution
   (S.N. - 1990)

2. Define Marriage and describe the various types of marriages in human societies.
   (15 Marks - 2014)

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. Present the way Island tribes of Lakshadweep experienced Culture Change.  
   (15 Marks)