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.
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**UPSC ANTHROPOLOGY PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTIONS** ...........................................07

**PRACTICE QUESTIONS FOR PEER REVIEW** .....................................................07

*Note - For convenience, the respective reference links have been dropped at the end of every topic.*
1. Anthropology & Witchcraft

- A belief in witches appears throughout much of human history. Although some believe that stories of witches are no longer relevant today, recent cultural events indicate that these powerful beliefs are still alive and well.
- *Witchcraft* refers to a belief in the perpetration of harm by persons through mystical means.
- The history of witch persecutions during the European Inquisition and Reformation have colored public understandings of witchcraft beliefs in more recent times.
- The most significant contribution of anthropological studies has been to show that the belief in witchcraft is encountered in nearly all continents of the world and that it continues to be an important feature of contemporary times.
- It is the generality of these beliefs that has attracted analytical attention. Anthropological studies have generally left open questions about the reality and actual performance of witchcraft. Instead, they have sought to unearth the social and psychological factors underlying witchcraft beliefs.

**What insights can come from the anthropological study of witchcraft?**

- The easiest sort of Anthropological answer as per Prof. Alma is that in America, people claim that their society was founded with the goal of promoting religious tolerance – although some historians would argue that that effort only applied to certain strands of Protestants and certainly not to Native Americans – but in any case, it’s a national story. In that case, an effort is made to understand any religion as it’s practiced in the world.
- Witchcraft is a religion on the same footing as Judaism, Hinduism, Animism, Islam and any other religion.
- These are all beliefs in an unseen force, which by acknowledgment of most believers can’t be proven by the methods of modern science. They all share a belief in something mystical.
- Many structural–functionalist accounts argued that, aside from witch persecution in historic Europe, witchcraft is benign or even of positive benefit to a community. A classic ethnographic work that advances this claim is Clyde Kluckhohn’s study of the Navajo ([1944] 1967).
- Kluckhohn (1905–60) observed that belief in witchcraft contributed positively to society by encouraging generosity, conformity to social values, and by leveling economic differences, as community members sought to avoid accusations of witchcraft.
- Like Malinowski, Kluckhohn saw psychological functions to witchcraft as well, with frustrations being vented at scapegoated individuals and community ties being affirmed through curing rituals for witchcraft-produced illnesses.
- Some also note that structural–functional interpretations of witchcraft fail to adequately draw attention to the genuine injustice associated with some witchcraft accusations, including in sub-Saharan Africa today. Scholar-activists with concern for human rights and religious tolerance have documented present-day injustice, including violence, toward people accused of witchcraft, especially in Africa.
- A scholarly study that combines structural–functional attention to witchcraft's association with social tension with a contemporary concern for injustice is Felicity Thomas's (2007) account of witchcraft and HIV/AIDS in Namibia. Because some Namibians blame HIV/AIDS on immoral behavior, many patients attribute their illness to witchcraft, a socially acceptable explanation. However, because patients also want to avoid witchcraft accusations—perhaps
by avoiding assistance from family networks that might result in the appearance of sudden wealth or good fortune—they may delay medical assistance or not utilize the help of family and friends when needed.

Reference:
https://news.illinois.edu/view/6367/198785

2. PESA Act

Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas (PESA) Act, 1996. To promote local self-governance in rural India, the 73rd constitutional amendment was made in 1992. Following powers and functions have been provided to the Gram Sabhas:

- Right to mandatory consultation in land acquisition, resettlement and rehabilitation of displaced persons.
- Protection of traditional belief, the culture of the tribal communities
- Ownership of minor forest products
- Resolution of the local disputes
- Prevention of land alienation
- Management of village markets
- Right to control production, distillation, and prohibition of liquor
- Exercise of control over money-lending
- Any other rights involving the Scheduled Tribes.

Issues Related to PESA:
- The state governments are supposed to enact state laws for their Scheduled Areas in consonance with this national law.
- This has resulted in the partially implemented PESA.
- The partial implementation has worsened self-governance in Adivasi areas, like in Jharkhand.
- Many experts have asserted that PESA did not deliver due to the lack of clarity, legal infirmity, bureaucratic apathy, absence of a political will, resistance to change in the hierarchy of power, and so on.
- Social audits conducted across the state have also pointed out that in reality different developmental schemes were being approved on paper by Gram Sabha, without actually having any meeting for discussion and decision making.
- PESA, if it is implemented in letter and spirit, will rejuvenate the dying self-governance system in the tribal area.
- This will also give an opportunity to correct the loopholes in the traditional governance system and make it a more gender-inclusive and democratic space.

Reference:
https://tribal.nic.in/actRules/PESA.pdf

3. Kinship & Anthropology/Sociology

- Kinship is the most universal and basic of all human relationships and is based on ties of blood, marriage, or adoption.
- There are two basic kinds of kinship ties:
  - Those based on blood that trace descent
  - Those based on marriage, adoption, or other connections
Definition
Kinship is a "system of social organization based on real or putative family ties," according to Encyclopedia Britannica. But in sociology, kinship involves more than family ties: "Kinship is one of the most important organizing components of society. This social institution ties individuals and groups together and establishes a relationship among them."
Kinship can involve a relationship between two people unrelated by lineage or marriage, according to David Murray Schneider, who was a professor of anthropology at the University of Chicago who was well known in academic circles for his studies of kinship.
At its most basic, kinship refers to "the bond (of) marriage and reproduction," says the Sociology Group, but kinship can also involve any number of groups or individuals based on their social relationships.

Types
Sociologists and anthropologists debate as to what types of kinship exist. Most social scientists agree that kinship is based on two broad areas: birth and marriage; others say a third category of kinship involves social ties. These three types of kinship are:
1. Consanguineal: This kinship is based on blood—or birth: the relationship between parents and children as well as siblings, says the Sociology Group. This is the most basic and universal type of kinship. Also known as a primary kinship, it involves people who are directly related.
2. Affinal: This kinship is based on marriage. The relationship between husband and wife is also considered a basic form of kinship.
3. Social: Schneider argued that not all kinship derives from blood (consanguineal) or marriage (affinal). There are also social kinships, where individuals not connected by birth or marriage may still have a bond of kinship, he said. By this definition, two people who live in different communities may share a bond of kinship through a religious affiliation or a social group, such as the Kiwanis or Rotary service club, or within a rural or tribal society marked by close ties among its members. A major difference between consanguineal or affinal and social kinship is that the latter involves "the ability to terminate absolutely the relationship" without any legal recourse, Schneider stated in his 1984 book, "A Critique of the Study of Kinship."

Reference:
https://www.thoughtco.com/kinship-3026370

4. Humans decorating jewelry in Eurasia
● Homo sapiens started to manipulate mammoth tusks for the production of pendants and mobiliary objects, like carved statuettes, at times decorated with geometric motifs.
● A new study, led by researchers of the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Germany, the University of Bologna in Italy, Wrocław University in Poland, the Polish Geological Institute-National Research Institute, Warsaw, Poland, and the Institute of Systematics and Evolution of Animals Polish Academy of Sciences, reports the oldest known punctate ivory pendant found in Eurasia. Its age of 41,500 years places this personal ornament from Stajnia Cave within the record of the earliest dispersals of Homo sapiens in Europe.
● Its age of 41,500 years places this personal ornament from Stajnia Cave within the record of the earliest dispersals of Homo sapiens in Europe.
● Determining the exact age of this jewellery was fundamental for its cultural attribution, and we are thrilled with the result. This work demonstrates that using the most recent methodological advances in the radiocarbon method enables us to minimise the amount of sampling and achieve highly precise dates with a very small error range. If we want to
seriously solve the debate on when mobiliary art emerged in Palaeolithic groups, we need to radiocarbon date these ornaments, especially those found during past fieldwork or in complex stratigraphic sequences.

- The study of the pendant and the awl was also carried out through digital methodologies starting from the micro-tomographic scans of the finds.
- The personal ornament was discovered in 2010 during fieldwork directed by co-author Mikołaj Urbanowski among animal bones and a few Upper Palaeolithic stone tools. Separate short term occupations by Neanderthals and Homo sapiens groups have been identified from the cave’s archaeological record. The disposal of the pendant probably occurred during a hunting expedition into the Kraków-Częstochowa Upland where the pendant broke and was left behind in the cave.

**Reference:**

5. Rats & Humans

- A decade after scientists discovered that lab rats will rescue a fellow rat in distress, but not a rat they consider an outsider, new research pinpoints the brain regions that drive rats to prioritize their nearest and dearest in times of crisis. It also suggests humans may share the same neural bias.
- Researchers have found that the group identity of the distressed rat dramatically influences the neural response and decision to help, revealing the biological mechanism of in-group bias.
- With nativism and conflicts between religious, ethnic and racial groups on the rise globally, the results suggest that social integration, rather than segregation, may boost cooperation among humans.
- The finding of a similar neural network involved in empathic helping in rats, as in humans, provides new evidence that caring for others is based on a shared neurobiological mechanism across mammals.
- Using fiber photometry, immunohistochemistry, calcium imaging and other diagnostic tools, researchers found that all the rats they studied experienced empathy in response to another rat's signs of distress.
- However, to act on that empathy, the helper rat's neural reward circuitry had to be triggered, and that only occurred if the trapped rat was of the same type as the helper rat, or member of its in-group.
- Humans and other mammals share virtually the same empathy and reward regions in the brain, implying that we may have similar biases toward our in-group when it comes to helping others.
- Overall, the findings suggest that empathy alone doesn't predict helping behavior, and that's really a crucial point.

**Reference:**
https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2021/07/210713165303.htm
UPSC Previous year questions based on today's concept:

1. New Physical Anthropology (S.N. - 1989)
2. Forms of descent groups (S.N. - 2007)

DAILY PRACTICE QUESTION/S FOR MAINS 2021.

Please do not forget to upload your answer sheet for a peer review on the telegram channel:

Sosin for Anthropology Q&A

1. Anthropology study of Kinship (15 marks)