

PLUTUS IAS

Anthropology Optional PYQ- Based Test Series 2025

Model Answers (Test 1)

By

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Q1. Write notes on the following in about 150 words:

a) Relevance of Social and Cultural Anthropology

DEMAND OF THE QUESTION

- The question simply asks us to explain why do we need social anthropology, its practical benefits, and social significance of this branch of anthropology.
- Explain its relevance through an example–

INTRODUCTION

Sociocultural anthropology examines human societies, cultures, and behaviors, to help understand adaptation, interaction, and social structures.

MAIN BODY

Sociocultural anthropology helped us understand how the society has got socio cultural stability and cohesion and social order as enunciated by **Radcliffe Brown**. It has helped us explain the evolution of sociocultural institutions like marriage, family, etc and their specific culture patterns like cultural regions and culture area (the idea of **Clark Wissler**). It helps us to realise the factors and values on which modern society is based, like the ideas of kinship and descent are based on psychological framework of binary opposites, noneconomic reciprocity, cultural and personality interactions etc.

It gives us important dynamic insights like it helps us in removing our biasedness towards other cultures, through ideas such as cultural relativism of **Boas**, like understanding **Maasai polygamy** within their cultural context. Thus it promotes coexistence, to have respect for diversity. Also it helps us to know how human beings transformed from biological animals to social animals. Thus it gives us clarity over the uniqueness of human beings as a cultural being as compared to other animals, such as the **Inuit people's** tools and hunting techniques for survival in the Arctic.

CONCLUSION

Thus it is highly relevant to study Sociocultural anthropology as it is essential for understanding human societies, fostering tolerance, and providing solutions to global issues such as peace and sustainability.

Value Addition

According to anthropologist **Clifford Geertz**, "**Culture is the shared symbols and meanings that people create and interpret through social interaction.**" This approach helps to understand how cultures influence individuals and groups and how human beings adapt and thrive within their environments.

Relevance of Sociocultural Anthropology:

- **Evolutionary Perspective:** Sociocultural anthropology helps trace the development of human societies in response to environmental pressures. For instance, the **Inuit people's** specialized tools, hunting techniques, and clothing reflect how their culture has evolved to survive in harsh Arctic conditions, demonstrating cultural adaptation over time.
- **Cultural Relativism and Ethnocentrism:** The discipline counters ethnocentrism by promoting cultural relativism. For example, the **Maasai practice of polygamy**, often viewed negatively outside their culture, serves important social and economic functions within their community. Understanding such practices within context promotes tolerance and respect for cultural diversity.
- **Holistic Approach:** Anthropology's holistic approach looks at the interconnections between various aspects of culture. Among the **Yanomami**, for example, their religious beliefs, social organization, and subsistence practices are intricately linked, offering a complete understanding of their way of life.
- **Intellectual and Scientific Approach:** Sociocultural anthropology also contributes to intellectual development. By integrating insights from ecology, sociology, and other fields, it provides a more comprehensive view of human societies. Studies of the **!Kung San's** sustainable practices, for instance, combine ecological and cultural perspectives.
- **Survival and Peace:** Finally, anthropology promotes peaceful coexistence. The **San people's** conflict resolution strategies, which emphasize negotiation and cooperation, offer valuable lessons for fostering peaceful, sustainable communities.

b) Applied and Action Anthropology

DEMAND OF THE QUESTION

- The question simply demands to bring out the *similarities and differences* between Applied and Action Anthropology
- Also present their *interconnectedness and complementary interrelationship* as well

with example.

INTRODUCTION

Applied anthropology and action anthropology both use anthropological knowledge to address real-world issues, but they differ in their approaches.

MAIN BODY

Applied Anthropology is defined as the use of anthropological knowledge and skills to solve real-world problems. **Sol Tax** proposed the term '***action anthropology***' in 1958 as "while studies anthropological problems, it **peruses it in a context of action** and it would not keep herself as a mere observer, but it **involves intimately in solving problem**". It is an offshoot development from applied anthropology. While both subfields aim to improve community well-being, applied anthropology is more into providing solutions in various fields like ***sports anthropology, nutritional anthropology, anthropology in design of equipment, forensic anthropology*** etc., while action anthropology centers on **empowerment and autonomy** of the community by helping to solve their problems by being a participant in the community. Applied anthropology shapes policies, like integrating indigenous healing in **Native American** health systems, while action anthropology fosters community-led initiatives, exemplified by Tax's work with the **Meskwaki** on education and economic development.

Aspect	Applied Anthropology	Action Anthropology
Goal	Solve problems using anthropological insight	Promote community-driven change
Approach	Informative and advisory	Collaborative and participatory
Community Role	Beneficiary	Active decision-makers
Focus	Policy and development applications	Empowerment and autonomy

Similarities-Both address real-world issues, emphasize **understanding cultural values, practices, and social structures** to inform solutions to improve community well-being. They emphasize cultural values, social structures, and collaboration to ensure meaningful and respectful solutions.

Interdependence- It is evident when applied anthropologists adopt participatory methods, as seen in **Navajo** projects where tribal leaders influenced program design.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, applied and action anthropology differ in methods, yet both aim to create culturally appropriate solutions for the community.

Value Addition

Applied and action anthropology are subfields focused on addressing real-world issues through anthropological knowledge. Both aim to engage with communities to solve social problems but differ in their methods and approaches. According to anthropologist **Sol Tax**, **applied anthropology involves using anthropological knowledge to address social challenges, while action anthropology actively works with communities to promote positive change.** Though distinct, both share a goal of making anthropology practical and impactful.

Action Anthropology:

Action anthropology, as defined by **Sol Tax**, emphasizes working directly with communities to implement change that is community-led. In projects with the **Meskwaki tribe**, Tax and his team facilitated community-driven programs in areas like education and economic development, ensuring that the tribe maintained control over outcomes.

Relationship and Interdependencies: Both fields intersect when applied anthropologists adopt participatory methods, blending with action anthropology. For instance, in a project with the **Navajo**, applied anthropologists included tribal leaders in program design to reflect action anthropology principles of empowerment. Applied anthropology typically takes an advisory role, using research to guide policy, such as integrating indigenous healing practices into health policies for Native American communities. In contrast, action anthropology, defined by **Sol Tax**, works directly with communities to implement change, as seen in his work with the **Meskwaki tribe**, focusing on education and economic development with community control.

Relevance: These subfields are essential in addressing global issues like health, education, and economic development. For example, both approaches are used to improve **educational systems among the Hopi**, ensuring programs respect and incorporate cultural values.

Limitations: Applied and action anthropology face challenges, including potential **conflicts between external goals and community values.** In the case of development projects in indigenous **Australian communities**, imposed solutions sometimes failed due to inadequate understanding of cultural contexts, emphasizing the need for culturally sensitive approaches.

Q2. a) What is hominization process? Discuss the major trends in human evolution with the help of suitable examples and illustrations. (20 marks)

DEMAND OF THE QUESTION

The question clearly has TWO PARTS-

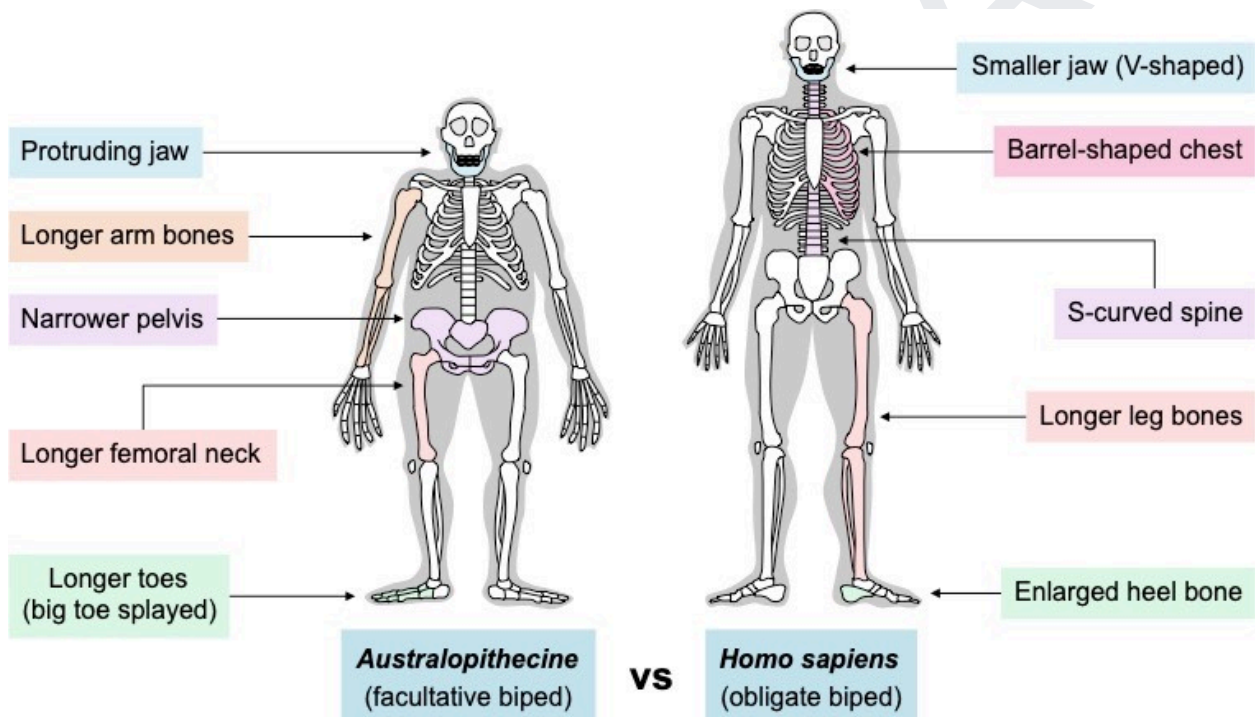
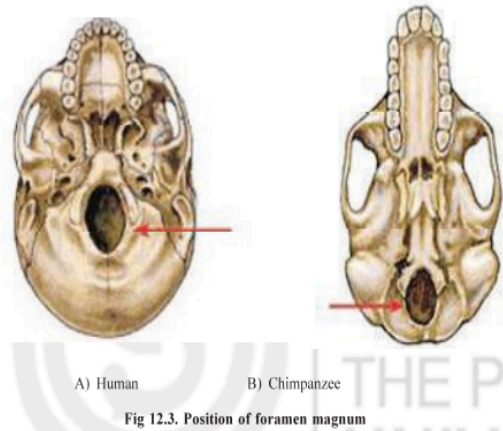
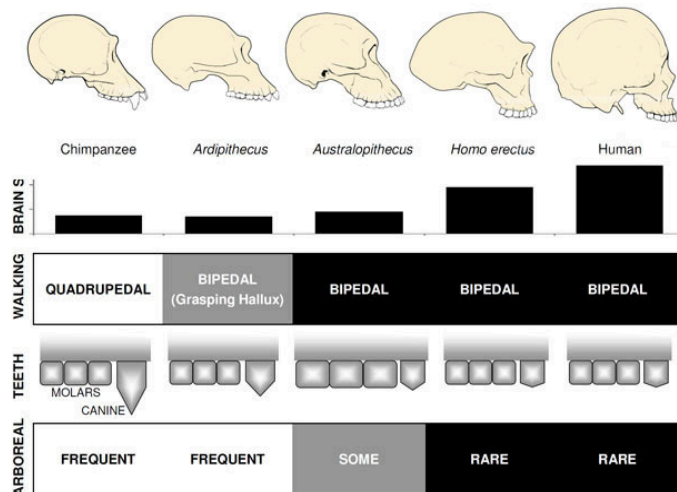
- **WHAT** → Demanding definition & brief of how they evolved- To **define what is Hominisation Process** as a concept and its key phases, major factors and key parameters with country examples.
- **DISCUSS** means → Presenting various viewpoints, arguments in detail to get a better understanding– **Discuss the *major trends in human evolution*** as well.

INTRODUCTION

Hominization is the gradual evolutionary shift from **Hominoids to Hominids**—marks a transformative journey defined by significant **anatomical, cognitive and cultural changes**, ultimately leading to **Homo sapiens**.

MAIN BODY

Key trends in hominization include **bipedalism**, as seen in *Australopithecus* species, which enabled efficient movement across landscapes. **Cranial expansion** in species like *Homo erectus* signaled increased cognitive abilities, while **reductions in jaw size and dentition** occurred alongside dietary shifts. Other trends include **more downward facing foramen magnum** (caused by a transition to bipedalism), **S-shaped curvature of the spine** (an artifact of an increasingly erect posture), **lower and broader pelvis** (bipedalism has changed the hominin birthing patterns and behaviours), change in relative **lengths of arm and leg bones** (arms have become relatively shorter and legs longer due to walking upright), **increased size of heel bone and alignment of big toe** (changes in feet to become greater weight-bearing structures), **flatter faces, with reduced brow ridges and jaw protrusion** (head is no longer the most anterior part of the body), **larger cranial capacity with increased brain size and greater encephalisation** (greater intellectual prowess), **smaller teeth and jaws more V-shaped** (reflecting changing dietary requirements with less emphasis on tough vegetation), marked **reduction in body hair** (improved hunting and cultural practices have led to the development of warm clothing) and **shift in muscle groups** (particularly the gluteal and hamstring groups, in order to accommodate new mode of locomotion). **Cultural complexity**, particularly in *Homo neanderthalensis* and early modern humans, reflects symbolic behaviors and social structures. **Tool use** emerged early, exemplified by Oldowan tools associated with *Homo habilis*.



Underlying these trends are evolutionary principles like natural selection and genetic processes. Adaptations such as bipedalism and tool-making arose from environmental pressures, while genetic drift, mutations, and gene flow—such as interactions between *Homo sapiens* and *Neanderthals*—added genetic diversity. Genetic Drift and Mutation allowed advantageous traits to persist. Processes like Gene Flow, as seen with *Homo sapiens* and *Neanderthals*, allowed for genetic exchanges that shaped modern human biology. Fossil findings in the Great Rift Valley, for instance, reveal how environmental changes impacted hominin evolution and migrations, including the Out-of-Africa migration. Although gaps in fossil records and unresolved lineages present challenges, physical anthropology continues to offer a comprehensive view of our adaptation and survival journey.

CONCLUSION

This understanding enriches our knowledge of human resilience, adaptability, and evolutionary progress, underscoring anthropology's commitment to exploring human origins and our capacity to innovate and evolve.

Value Addition

Human evolution refers to the broader trajectory of these changes, focusing on the **biological and cultural adaptations** that helped early humans survive and thrive across space and time.

Major Trends in Hominization and Human Evolution

- **Bipedalism:** The shift to upright walking, evidenced by *Australopithecus* species, allowed for energy-efficient movement across open landscapes.
- **Tool Use and Manufacture:** Early tools, such as Oldowan stone tools found with *Homo habilis* fossils, highlight technological adaptations.
- **Cranial Expansion and Brain Development:** Larger brains in species like *Homo erectus* indicate increased cognitive capacities, essential for problem-solving and social organization.
- **Reduction in Dentition and Jaw Size:** Changes in diet and food processing led to smaller teeth and jaws, a trend visible in *Homo sapiens*.
- **Cultural Complexity:** Evidence of symbolic behavior and social structures in *Homo neanderthalensis* and early modern humans shows advanced cognitive development.

Limitations: There are gaps in the fossil record that make it challenging to reconstruct complete evolutionary pathways. Theoretical perspectives can bias interpretations, as seen in debates over species classification. Some hominin lineages remain unclear, complicating the understanding of direct ancestors.