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Q5(e)

Modes of Subsistence.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2021 · Anthropology GS 1 · 10 marks · Meaning, Scope and development of Anthropology.

1.1 Meaning, Scope and development of Anthropology.

Core demand of the question

- Write a note on Modes of Subsistence
- Keep the note to a 10-mark length of about 150 words

Revision summary

Modes of subsistence are organised food economies.

Foragers, horticulturalists, pastoralists, and farmers are the core set.

Andaman, **Yanomami**, **Nuer**, Inuit, and Tibetan cases teach the range.

Marx stressed property and labour; **Sahlins** stressed forager plenty.

Modes mix; they are not racial stages.

Introduction

Modes of subsistence are the organised ways people get food and materials. They shape density, mobility, and politics, without being a unilinear ladder.

Body**The usual set**

- **Foraging (hunting, gathering, fishing):** Andaman islanders, many San, and **Inuit** sea-mammal economies. Bands, sharing, and low density are common, not universal.
- **Horticulture and shifting cultivation:** **Yanomami** gardens of plantain and manioc with hunting. Villages, fission, and limited surplus.
- **Pastoralism:** herd mobility, as on the **Tibetan plateau** and among **Nuer** cattle keepers. Wealth on the hoof, raid, and alliance.
- **Agriculture and irrigation: peasant and state surplus, from Near Eastern Jericho** fields to plough India. Stratification becomes likely.
- **Industrial** wage food is a further mode, not the end of anthropology.

Reading

- **Marx** named modes of production with property and labour. **Sahlins** warned that foragers need not be poor.
- A people may mix modes. Subsistence is an economy, not a racial type.

Flow diagram

Subsistence -> Forage
Subsistence -> Horticulture
Subsistence -> Pastoralism
Subsistence -> Agriculture

Conclusion

Forage, garden, herd, and plough are the teaching modes. They constrain politics and density, and they mix in real lives.

Facts & figures

Sahlins

Original affluent society argued that many foragers meet needs with modest work.

Yanomami

Garden and hunt economy with village fission, a horticultural type case.

Nuer

Cattle as subsistence and as the idiom of kinship and feud.

Childe

Neolithic and urban revolutions tied subsistence shifts to social scale.