Typhloperipatus Williamsoni

Prelims – *Current events of national importance| General issues on Environmental ecology, Bio-diversity.*

Mains (GS III) – *Conservation.*

Why in News?

A group of scientists has announced the rediscovery of a long-forgotten species of velvet worms (phylum Onychophora), which are among the oldest living fossils on the planet, after a gap of 111 years.

- It is an ***ancient velvet worm species*** (phylum Onychophora), one of the oldest living fossils in the world.

Onychopora
• It has an ancient lineage that dates back over 350 million years. • It comprises only two families and fewer than 200 species, indicating a limited diversity. • These organisms evolved alongside dinosaurs, and it is likely that many were lost during the mass extinction event.

- **First discovered in -** December 1911 in Siang Valley.
    - After that there have been no documented records of it from India.
- The molecular analysis of T. williamsoni revealed that South Asian onychophoras diverged from their
    - Neotropical counterparts, those found in Central and South America, as well as
    - Southern Mexico and the Caribbean approximately 237 million years ago.
- Notably, it was discovered that ***Asian onychophoras*** lack any relatives among the Australian species.
- This finding is particularly striking, as invertebrates from Southeast Asia and India typically share connections with those in Australia.
- Asian onychophora stands out as one of the rare exceptions to this relationship.

Reference

[The Hindu | Typhloperipatus williamsoni]

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