
BLOCK 2 : Origin and Development of Anthropology

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UNIT 4 HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY*

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Learning Objectives

In this unit, you will learn the following about anthropology:

- its philosophical and historical roots;
- the political and social context of its growth;
- its initial goals;
- its diversification; and
- its development in the context of global issues and relevance.

4.0 INTRODUCTION

Anthropology is the discipline devoted to the study of human beings. It is a paradox that humans practically studied everything else before they turned their eyes on their own selves. The reason was simple: that being what they were was always taken by all human communities across the world as a given, as a taken for granted truth for which no questions were asked. Whatever was asked was answered through existing cosmologies and myths that were taken as primordial truths and never questioned. In this unit you will learn about the fascinating story of how and why after many centuries of learning to read and write and after developing the astronomical, mathematical, biological and all other sciences, humans finally turned the inquisitive gaze upon themselves.

* Contributed by Prof. Subhadra Channa, Department of Anthropology, University of Delhi, Delhi

4.1 THE AGE OF REASON AND BEGINNINGS OF SCIENCE IN EUROPE

Around the 16th century, Europe underwent a paradigm shift in philosophical thinking as it expanded its geopolitical boundaries across the world in terms of travel and trade. There was growing disillusionment with the Church and its dictums. The French Revolution as well as the American Revolution brought about the realization that the social order was not based on divine origins but was an entity that could be shaken at its roots by human action and agency. The exposure to the rest of the globe also made the Europeans realize that societies and people could be found in varieties of forms and shapes, not only in terms of physical differences but also in terms of customs, ways of life and thinking.

Even before Darwin and Wallace had formulated the theories of biological evolution, the French thinkers and the Scottish Enlightenment philosophers were formulating their hypotheses of human social evolution and the possibility of society being a human rather than a divine creation. The exposure to other cultures triggered ideas of social evolution as the European thinkers tried to explain the diversity of cultures by connecting them with their own past. Auguste Comte gave the theory of a stage-by-stage evolution of human societies. Human societies, according to him, evolved through the following stages:

- Theological
- Metaphysical
- Scientific (Reason)

Comte's thesis put Europeans at the top of the evolutionary scale. When Europeans looked at other people, they thought they were looking down as well as looking back. Comte concentrated on the reflective faculties of humans and their capacity for rational thought.

Another major contributor to theory of social evolution was Herbert Spencer, who was also a contemporary of Charles Darwin. Their (Comte's and Spencer's) theories of social and biological evolutions overlapped to some extent. Spencer's rather controversial theory that societies behave like natural systems where all those parts (people) that are weak or lack survival potential get eliminated was established as the popular conception of 'survival of the fittest' that also got mistakenly grafted to Darwin's theory of evolution. Spencer's theory was also used by the emerging industrial capitalism of Europe to justify both the spread of colonial rule and the onus that capitalism put on the individual entrepreneur.

Both Comte and Spencer along with other European scholars represented what is known as the Positivist approach to the study of social phenomenon. This approach advocated that societies were capable of being studied and analyzed as objects like any other object of scientific investigation. In other words, a scholar of society was also a scientist who could apply his analytical skills to objectively scrutinize society with the same degree of objective detachment and methodological rigour that a scientist brings to his examinations. Societies were compared to organisms and like organisms they were subjects of evolution and predictable laws.

Two of the greatest 19th century thinkers, Freud and Marx also followed this Positivist philosophy to put forward their ‘scientific’ theories of human biopsychological and social development respectively. Both, like Darwin, had great influence on later developments in social sciences and on the discipline of anthropology. A great deal of theory building in the age of Positivism was triggered by the great curiosity that Europeans had about their ‘origins’ and ultimately it was this search for the origin and evolution of human beings that gave rise formally to a discipline labeled anthropology or the Science of Man. This original definition of anthropology indicates the two basic assumptions that informed the establishment of this discipline; one, that humans were potential subjects for scientific analysis in all aspects of their being and second, that to be really ‘human’ was to be a Man.

This brings us to another philosophical paradigm of the Age of Reason or Enlightenment; the nature/culture dichotomy, and its superimposition on the female/male duality, recognized and established by almost all major thinkers of the European Renaissance, such as Francis Bacon, Freud and even Darwin. Humans with their faculty of reason were destined to dominate nature and this was also the manner of defining civilization. Women, whom both Freud and Darwin had characterised as driven by instinct, were not guided by reason, as were men. They were more like nature, biological creatures to be dominated and also protected by men. This was the mindset that attributed all intellectual activity to the realm of the masculine while the feminine was confined to the domestic domain, with the result that most of the recognized theoreticians of the west were men.

4.2 THE POLITICAL BACKGROUND TO DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL THEORY

No theory arises in a vacuum. Galileo and Copernicus were ahead of their times and suffered the consequences of challenging to dominant theory of their times. Darwin, however, came at the right time. He put forward a theory that completely shook what was written about Genesis in the Bible but was accepted with enthusiasm. Anthropology was developing because Europe was at its peak in colonizing the rest of the world. The relatively equal relationship established through trade was being turned into one of political domination and gross exploitation.

Trautmann (1997) has described how the British treated Indians with respect and almost awe as long as they were trading, but as soon as the rule of Queen Victoria was established Indians and their culture was denigrated to the level of savagery and all native customs were disparagingly dismissed as uncivilized. The rising needs of capitalist economy were pushing Europe to a relentless search for resources to feed its growing industries both in terms of raw materials as well for markets for selling their goods. However at the same time, the Enlightenment period was the time of flowering of ideas of equality, humanism and liberty; thoughts that originated from the French and American revolutions. There was a strong belief among the Europeans that they being ‘civilized’, were the carriers of human values of justice and democracy. There was an obvious contradiction between this faith and the genocidal activities that accompanied colonization.

It was the evolutionary theories that justified and supported the spread of European rule by creating the image of the 'primitive other'. As put forward by an array of scholars from Comte, Bachoven, Maine, McLennan and others, human societies had gone through several stages that were also linearly progressive. The peak of evolution was reached by the Western societies, whose dominance was further justified by Spencer's dictum of 'survival of the fittest'. Thus the Europeans were succeeding because they were more 'fit' and also the people they were colonizing were 'primitives' who were compared to immature children by Freud and were considered at lower stages of mental evolution by Darwin. The colonies were regressed in stages that had not quite reached the patriarchal, male-dominated civilization of the west.

Scholars such as Bachoven and McLennan, for instance, considered female domination as a sign of 'backwardness' putting matriline/matriarchy as a lower stage of human evolution. This was in compliance with the view of the nature/culture, women/men dichotomy already established (Ortner 1974). Since western societies were strongly patriarchal in both religion and law, they were superior. They were also self-professed examples of superior civilization that justified their taking over and 'civilizing' the primitives.

4.3 ANTHROPOLOGY AS A DISCIPLINE

The discipline of anthropology was finally established as a distinct discipline with Edward B. Tylor assuming the chair of anthropology at the Oxford University. The goals of the discipline were to formally study and research the origins and diversity of human beings. Darwin had firmly established that the human was a single species biologically and the race theories that had attributed differences in human societies to their racial differences were discarded at the scholarly level. If race was not the criteria then one had to look for other reasons for both the physical as well as the social differences between various human groups.

The discipline of anthropology then was to examine the biological as well as social evolution of humans and to explain the observed differences of physical types and of social and cultural life.

- The biological evolution needed to look beyond the time when humans became humans so biological evolution was rooted in paleo-anthropology (the study of fossil remains of humans and pre-human hominids) and primatology (the study of behavior and physiology of higher primates).
- The social evolution not only examined pre-historical remains and archaeological roots but also considered existing human societies as remains of the past of the most evolved societies, namely the western European.

It was this last assumption that formed the basis of the theory of social evolution where Tylor assumed that spatial differences could be translated into temporal differences. While this theory put some people on the lower rungs of the evolutionary ladder, it also based itself on what was then recognized as the theory of 'psychic unity of mankind'. Since humans were one species, it was believed their mental functioning would necessarily be the same. All humans were supposed to have one Culture, what Ingold

(1982) has called culture with a capital C. The observed differences were then explained by saying that the different peoples had evolved to different levels of culture, with the added proposition that all would ultimately attain the same level of culture as had already been attained by the western civilization.

Anthropology was at times criticized for being a colonial discipline especially as the theory of social evolution was both Eurocentric and directly or indirectly supported colonization by its definition of ‘civilization’ as synonymous with the west.

Anthropology diversified into four main branches:

- Physical or biological anthropology that dealt with human biological diversity.
- Linguistics that dealt with relationship between culture and language.
- Archaeology that delved into the past of human society.
- Social/cultural anthropology.

However these branches are not totally exclusive of each other and the fact of humans evolving as cultured beings, who live in society, underlies all aspects of anthropology. The initial Eurocentric bias of anthropology was later replaced by a far more relativistic and humanistic approach. The historical transformations of the world had much to do with changes in anthropological paradigms.

Check Your Progress 1

1) According to Comte human societies evolved through how many stages?

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2) What were the main ideas of the Enlightenment period?

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3) Where was anthropology established as a distinct discipline?

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4.4 THE BRITISH AND AMERICAN SCHOOLS OF ANTHROPOLOGY

The intrinsic relationship of anthropology with colonization is explicit in the further development of the discipline in its British version and the

development of what came to be known as the American Cultural Tradition. In the continent, the academic roots of British structural-functional school was drawn from the functionalism of Durkheim(1858-1917)who belonged to the French school of sociology.

The structural-functional school critiqued the classical evolutionists for their speculative theories. Moving away from the deductive theories of evolution they moved to empiricism and developed the field study method that has today become the hallmark of anthropology. They believed that each society has a structure in the form of social relationships and there is a functional logic of each part of this structure that contributes to the whole.

The basic premises of structural-functionalism was based on the axiom of cultural relativism, that cultures were not higher and lower manifestation of stages of the same Culture, but cultures in plural were each functional wholes. Each society was bounded and could be compared to a living organism whose parts contribute to the functioning of the entire body. Thus one could not study parts of cultures, like religion and kinship, by using the comparative method, as was done in classical evolutionary theory, but a society needed to be studied in its entirety and in depth, and the functional relationship between its parts established by close and intimate interaction with the people concerned.

The British anthropologists mainly responsible for this approach used it to study those societies under the rule of the Crown that needed to be governed to be in stable equilibrium. To some extent the desire of the administrators was reflected in the academic presumptions.

The fieldwork method was given its classical shape by Bronislaw Malinowski's long duration study of the Trobriand islanders. That Malinowski became a fieldworker of such dedication, not voluntarily but by the exigencies of the World War, did not deter from him being declared the master fieldworker of all times and his book *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922) a manual that all anthropology students read like the Bible.

The functional studies were carried out by the British and French anthropologists in most of the colonies and they were often engaged by the colonial governments to help the administration by providing information about the people so that they could be better governed and managed. Often as in India, many administrators became anthropologists of sorts when they carried out fieldwork among the people they were required to govern. But the works of these administrator/ethnographers were not free from bias (Channa 1992).

Although anthropologists were often initially in the pay of the state, and were required to support the state agenda of colonization, as a result of long stay and intimate contact with the people they were sent to study, they often turned up against the policies of the state. Sometimes their influence changed the policies of the government, like for example the influence of anthropologist Verrier Elwin on the policies made by Nehru's government regarding the manner in which the people of North-East of India were to be governed.

Anthropologists often advocated for retention of local customs and were against undue interference in the lives of the native. The anthropologists

working in India and Africa were mostly part of governments that worked from, 'outside'. India and large parts of Africa were external colonies of the British, French and Dutch governments, that retained to a large extent their native societies and cultures; similar conditions existed in Indonesia, Burma and other colonies not totally taken over by the white populations.

In America, the situation was quite different. Here the Native Americans had not only been dispersed and their societies destroyed, many tribes and communities had been depleted to almost the last survivors, when the anthropologists began to study them. The father of American anthropology, Franz Boas, also drew his roots from German Diffusionism that emphasized history, migration and a more particularistic view of social transformation.

Unlike the classical evolutionist and functional roots of British social anthropology, the Americans, facing genocide and massive dissemination of societies could not face up to a synchronic, functional view of timeless harmony visualized by the structural-functionalists. First of all they focused by necessity on the concept of culture as against that of society because what they did get to study were not functioning societies but left-over bits of people's lives like myths, folklore, material culture and narratives of ways of lives that had disappeared or were going to disappear soon. The people they studied, like the Navaho, were a people living in reservations, in abject poverty, mental and physical misery, practicing witchcraft not to maintain a functioning society like the study made by Evans-Pritchard on the Azande, but to survive conditions of extreme hardship.

Kroeber, a direct student of Boas and a doyen of American anthropology, gave his famous definition of culture as 'super-organic, super-individual', in other words something that could still be studied even if the culture bearers were gone. Boas' Historical Particularism was not a theory of sweeping generalizations but looked upon culture as a product of history, situated in specific environmental conditions and carried by people who had particular mindsets that were conducive to the nature of culture they were carrying. In other words, Boas and his followers did not limit themselves to the domain of the social exclusively like the structural-functionalists did but looked to history, psychology and environment to explain the nature of culture.

Boas' book *The Mind of the Primitive Man* was a study in cognition and he was also influenced by Gestalt Psychology of the German school. The concept of ethos, developed by Kroeber, where he talks of the whole as being something other than the sum of its parts, was also influenced by the Gestalt school. Other scholars emerging from the American School developed the link between culture and personality further, bringing in psychological concepts to explain cultural differences, like Ruth Benedict's work (1934) on the patterns of culture that also made use of the concept of cultural ethos.

Boas transmitted his interest in psychology to his students such as Margaret Mead, Linton and others who later laid the foundations of the branch of psychological anthropology that developed out of the culture personality school. Freudian theory of early formation of personality was reformulated by anthropologists who pointed out that early childhood experiences were embedded in culturally specific methods of child rearing and therefore culture was a prime driver of personality formation. One offshoot of this theory was the concept of national culture that found great popularity.

The American School not only branched off into psychological fields but also into ecological anthropology, economic anthropology, medical anthropology and historical anthropology from its roots of historical particularism. After the Fifties, however, the separation of the two traditions almost disappeared as both structural-functionalism and historical particularism were replaced by more contemporary theories.

4.5 MARXISM POST-STRUCTURALISM AND THE EMERGENCE OF A HUMANIST ANTHROPOLOGY

After the Second World War there were again major paradigm shifts as the geo-political nature of the world changed. The synchronic and harmonious view of society was shattered and history entered into analysis in a major way. The havoc caused by the capitalist, industrial technology led to the emergence of critical theories that not only challenged the supremacy of European civilization but also raised doubts about the efficacy of the so-called objectivism of western scientific methods. The earlier native, or primitive 'others' were fast entering into the academic discourses as were women. Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) shows that the West's Eurocentric construction of 'Other' was biased. Similarly, feminist scholars condemned the 'white, male centric' perspective masquerading as the universal perspective.

A strong critique of western capitalism also entered through the French School of Marxism and what came to be known as the New Economic Anthropology that again brought in historicity, contradictions and critical examination of concepts that were idealized through the western capitalist mode of thought. A major outcome of the entry of Left-oriented thinkers into academic discourse was to criticize notions of modernity and development which were synonymous with western capitalism. The emergence of strong politically oriented anthropology that formed effective criticisms of existing paradigms of race, gender, class and culture gave rise also to re-examination of earlier established concepts such as 'tribe', tradition, society and culture.

Concepts like 'indigenous' replaced those like 'tribe' that were seen as imposed and having essentialist characters. The term "indigenous" on the other hand was acceptable to the people themselves for it had the political connotation of 'marginalization' that was seen as a more politically correct view of as things were.

The structural-functional definition of tribe as a bounded and ahistorical entity was criticized in the works of Wolf, where he showed that absence of history was a complete fabrication of western scholars who ignored widespread and ancient trade and migration histories to interpret history only according to the activities of the western people. Thus those so-called isolated tribes were isolated only from the west but otherwise had deep-rooted and ancient contacts with many non-western societies.

The evolutionary paradigm that hunting food-gathering people had a 'primitive' technology that prevented them from evolving to higher technologies such as of food production was likewise refuted by ethnographic evidences that showed that not only did the foraging mode of life afford the

people plenty of leisure but that hunters and foragers were often sustained by long distance trade with urban civilizations over centuries. Much of earlier formulated anthropological concepts and terminologies were thus criticized as being essentialized and artificially constructed monolithic constructions that depicted more of what the anthropologists believed was true than depicting actual situations. A pervasive criticism was that the positivist methods privileged the observer in the form of the scholar and ignored the native's voice. For instance, a simple observation made by Kapadia (1995) is that in all kinship studies the ego is taken as male but in real life in South India where she has done fieldwork, when people talk of marriage negotiations they talk of the girl and not the boy getting married; also kinship is mostly described through women and with female ego. Numerous such observations were made to deconstruct existing paradigms and taken-for-granted concepts.

Positivism was also criticized in terms of methodology. Re-studies and research by some native anthropologists and women scholars demonstrated that the methodological rigour and 'objectivism' professed by the earlier anthropologists was only a fiction. Thus Weiner(1976) in her restudy of Trobriand Islands was able to show that Malinowski for all his expertise was not able to even understand the contribution of women to ritual and trade and their social and economic importance in Trobriand society was completely overlooked.

The fieldwork situation was thus reinterpreted as one of inter-subjective interaction where the subjective 'self' of the anthropologist was engaged in interaction with those of the people he/she studied. The identity of the anthropologist was as important in setting the stage for fieldwork data collection as was the social and cultural characters of the people under study. Gender and political identities were seen as integral to the process of data collection itself, making it clear that any information about human societies collected by another human being was not an objective scientific procedure but was essentially only one form of a human interaction where all parameters including sentiments and emotions were involved.

Towards the end of the last century and as we are progressing more into the new century, anthropology is becoming a discipline that is moving away from its initial definition of the science of man. From rigid classifications and generalizations, there is emphasis on fluidity of concepts, more introspective reflexivity in analysis and recognition that human lives and situations are not amenable to imposed restrictive categorizations. From being impersonal analysts, anthropologists are emerging as mediators between the people they study and the world outside.

In this sense the anthropological method based on fieldwork and qualitative analysis has emerged as the key definition of the discipline rather than any concepts or laws that it may have generated. To a large extent the changes in science and scientific paradigms like the shift from particle to quantum physics, have also been responsible for post-modern philosophical trends.

The belief in the fixity of phenomenon and in an ordered existence is being replaced by the more mystical order of the universe, the fluidity of existence and disappearance of boundaries. The boundaries between disciplines are also breaking down so that contemporary anthropology is making interfaces

with philosophy, history, political science, medicine and other disciplines that too likewise are drawing upon anthropology, especially its qualitative methods and humanitarian approach.

Check Your Progress 2

4) What is the hallmark of anthropology studies?

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5) What was replaced by contemporary theories after the fifties?

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6) What is New Economic Anthropology?

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4.6 SUMMARY

Thoughts and theories about human societies are influenced and engendered by the historical and political context in which they take shape. Ideas are shaped by the social environment and the lived conditions of the people who are the originators of these ideas. The various historical circumstances such as the Dark Ages of medieval Europe, the reaction against the Church, the revolutions and wars that reshaped the world and the post-colonial emergence of nation-states, economic liberalization and globalization are processes that have had deep impact on people’s ways of thinking and conceptualizing.

From being creators of grand theories like that of classical evolutionism, and structuralism, anthropologists are now into more down-to-earth queries into the conditions of human life; taking sides often with the marginalized and speaking up for those with no voice. More and more anthropologists are taking critical stands against inequality, injustice and social and environmental imbalances. In the emerging times anthropology is becoming a true discipline of humans for humans.

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4.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Comte's thesis describes that human societies evolved through the ages of Theology, Metaphysics and Reason. It put Europeans at the top of the evolutionary scale.
- 2) The Enlightenment period was the time of flowering of ideas of equality, humanism and liberty, thoughts that originated from the French and American revolutions.
- 3) The discipline of anthropology was established as a distinct discipline with Edward B. Tylor assuming the chair of anthropology at the Oxford University.

Check Your Progress 2

- 4) The field study method has today become the hallmark of anthropology.
- 5) After the Fifties, however, the separation of the two traditions almost disappeared as both structural-functionalism and historical particularism were replaced by more contemporary theories.
- 6) The New Economic Anthropology brought in historicity, contradictions and critical examination of concepts that were idealized through the western capitalist mode of thought.

UNIT 5 ANTHROPOLOGY IN INDIA*

Contents

- 5.0 Introduction
- 5.1 Growth of Social/Cultural Anthropology in India
- 5.2 Growth of Physical/Biological Anthropology in India
- 5.3 Growth of Prehistoric/Archeology Anthropology in India
- 5.4 Summary
- 5.5 References
- 5.6 Answers to Check Your Progress

Learning Objectives

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- understand the growth of anthropology in India from its formative phase to its current phase; and
- describe and comprehend the concepts and theoretical models that were developed by anthropologists to study Indian civilization.

5.0 INTRODUCTION

Anthropology in India was introduced in second half of the 19th century. During this period many British anthropologists came to India and conducted studies on tribals and other communities. Apart from anthropologists, British administrators also collected data on Indian communities and published monographs of their studies. This period had few trained Indian anthropologists to do research. Departments of anthropology in India universities emerged only in the beginning of 20th century and they started producing anthropology students. Many anthropologists irrespective of their nationality studied Indian society, culture and civilization.

5.1 GROWTH OF SOCIAL/CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY IN INDIA

Anthropological studies in India commenced in second half of the 19th century. Of the four subfields of anthropology, social/cultural anthropology in India was first to come of age. Based on the type of the work that was being done in anthropology, authors have divided anthropology into 3 or 4 phases, although Indian anthropologists such as L. P. Vidyarthi, D. N. Majumdar and Basu Roy differ in their opinion pertaining to different time periods. The following are the phases of development of anthropology in India.

Phases of Development of Anthropology in India

D.N. Majumdar		L. P. Vidyarthi		Basu Roy	
Formative period	1774-1911	Formative phase	1774-1919	Formative phase	1774-1919
Constructive phase	1912-1937	Constructive phase	1920-1949	Constructive phase	1920-1949
Critical phase	1938 onward	Analytical phase	1950 on going	Analytical phase	1950-1990
				Evaluative Phase	1990 to the present

Formative phase (1774-1919): Anthropologists introduced ethnographic studies on tribes and other populations. Most of the monographs were published on traditions, customs and beliefs of tribes and other caste communities. In addition to the above monographs, government officials' revenue reports were also published by Dalton and Buchanon. The Asiatic Society was established by Sir William Jones in the year 1784. The society began to publish articles in journals, where most of the publications were on anthropology and few were on Indian tribes. Most articles were published by British authors. An essay of anthropological interest was published in *The Indian Antiquary* in 1872.

During the formative phase the Anthropological Society of Bombay (1886) published a journal which was the first journal where number of anthropological studies were initiated. In India this phase was the beginning of scientific study of 'nature and man'. During this phase the anthropologically oriented scholars were posted in different parts of the country to study Indian society and culture. The main objective behind the posting of these scholars was to acquaint the government officials with Indian population of different regions to ensure colonial administration. During this phase when Risley became head of census operations in India, a separate wing for ethnographic survey was developed which initiated the project "People of India".

For the first time, anthropology as a subject was introduced in the Department of Sociology of Bombay University in 1919.

Some of the British social anthropologists who came to India for ethnographic work were:

- W.H.R. Riverse: conducted study on Todas of Nilgiri Hills;
- A.R. Radcliffe-Brown: well-known structural functionalists who studied the Andaman Islanders,
- Charles Gabriel Seligman and Brenda Z. Seligman: wrote on the Veddas of Sri Lanka.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Into how many phases the growth of anthropology in India was divided by D.N. Majumdar and L. P.Vidyarthi? Explain?

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In social anthropology scholars started publishing their ethnographic work on different population of India. Some of the notable works of this kind include *Tribes and Castes of Bengal* published by H. H. Risley in the year 1891. The book can be accessed through the link <https://archive.org/details/tribesandcastes00rislgoog/page/n4>

S. C. Roy, the first Indian ethnographer who helped the oppressed tribals of the region, started his work among the tribals of Chotanagpur and published his monograph *Munda and their Country* in 1912. Regarding the subject of anthropology Roy was of opinion that anthropology is for use, for nation-building in a positive sense, for fellow-feeling among human beings and for writing the eternal history of humankind. He wished anthropology to be taught as a subject in all universities and also as a requirement of officers in administration and bureaucracy.

L.K. Anantha Krishna Iyer published his work *Cochin Tribes and Castes. The Journal of Bihar and Orissa Research Society* was started in 1915 and focused on history, archaeology, anthropology and philology. During this phase some scholars from abroad carried out the ethnographic works in India. These works include the following:

- *The Khasi* (1907) by P R T Gurdon,
- *The Lhota Naga* (1922) by J. P. Mills,
- *The Lushei Kuki Clans* (1912) by J Shakespeare and
- *The Chamars* (1920) by G. W. Briggs.

The empirical study of tribal people was central to anthropology. The work of anthropological research disseminated across the country by publishing through print media.

Eastern India	Middle India	South India	North India
Risley, Dalton,	Russel O'Malley	Thurston	Crooks

For very long time till 1940, foreigner and Indian scholars primarily focused their studies on tribals. The major development of social anthropology took place in the constructive phase (1920-1949) when a full-fledged anthropology department was established in Calcutta University in 1920. Pioneers of Indian anthropology such as L.K. Anantha Krishna Iyer and R. Chanda joined the department and started a post-graduate course in the university. This was the first time when avenues for anthropology in the academics (including social anthropology) were started. L.K. Anantha Krishna Iyer published monographs on *Tribe and Caste of Ernakulam*. He also read paper on *Marriage Customs*

of the Cochin Stat' and Nambuthari Brahmins of Malabar at Indian Science Congress in 1914.

Constructive phase: In 1921 under the editorship of S.C. Roy, print journal *Man in India* was started. Among the branch of social anthropology Indian anthropologist like D. N. Majumdar, T. C. Das, M. Chattopadhyay, I. Karve, A. Aiyappan started working and publishing in the areas of social institutions. Their extensive work on social institutions provided a long needed impetus to the development of social anthropology. According to L. P. Vidyarthi a big jump in anthropology came during 25th Indian Science Congress which was held at Calcutta in 1938. The theme of the Congress was 'Anthropology in India'. Many eminent Indian social anthropologist delivered lectures and discussion were done on future anthropological research work. Apart from academic activities a lot of development took place in anthropology during the Congress. Most importantly the progress of anthropology in India was reviewed by Indian Science Congress Association and the British Association.

Many significant works including *The Changing Hoof* D. N. Majumdar, *Marriage and Family in Mysore* of M. N. Srinivas and *Hindu Methods of Tribal Absorption* of N. K. Bose may be described as the turning point in the growth of social anthropology in India. Majumdar's study on Ho in the Kolhan region of Chotanagpur was focused on culture contact and acculturation which became a basis for anthropology students. For his study he used the MARC model which means Man, Area, Resource and Cooperation. According to him the relationship between these four elements guide the existence of any society.

- Man: Human beings having biological needs and physical properties.
- Area: Spaces which they occupy, the geographical referent which forms the basis of their existence.
- Resource: Materials available in the spaces that they occupy.
- Cooperation: Relationship between the human beings studied.

Harmony in all these four elements leads to a functional unity in society. This unity breaks down due to external pressures. On the basis of his model Majumdar claimed that the Hos were being influenced by external pressures. He saw that primitive tribes are declining and this was also a primary concern for anthropologists. According to him, advanced culture impinging on a simple and passive society is causing such decline. He was not in the favor of creating reserves for tribals and including them very closely within the Hindu fold as a backward form of Hinduism. He supported them to be integrated into Indian society, a form that he called "creative or generative adaptation." He believed that dominant groups should give respect to those communities who are backward or downtrodden. A social change, in his opinion, should not be disruptive but should be incontinuity with existing cultural traditions.

Many other foreigner scholars contributed problem-oriented works on tribes at this juncture. Foremost among them were Verrier Elwin and Christopher von Fürer-Haimendrof.

Verrier Elwin worked on the tribes of Madhya Pradesh and Orissa. Among his books were:

Origin and Development of Anthropology

- *The Baiga* (1939),
- *The Agaria* (1943) and
- *The Muria and their Ghotul* (1947).

During his popular work on the Baigas, he observed that Baigas were being destroyed by the landlords and the missionaries. In order to protect Baigas from exploitation Elwin suggested that the state should prevent or control their interaction with outsiders. He also proposed to government that the tribes should be left alone and they should be allowed to develop on their own. During his work on Murias of Bastar he observed that youth dormitories are an indispensable part of many other tribal societies as well. These dormitories were responsible for training the youth in various social activities and for initiating them into sexual activities. His study led others to work on the activities of the youth dormitories in other tribal societies.

Haimendr of was an Austrian ethnologist who spent nearly four decades in Indian. Among his books were:

- *The Chenchus: Jungle folk of Deccan* (1943).
- *The Raj Gond of Adilabad: Myth and Ritual* (1948).
- *The Reddis of the Bison Hills: A Study of Acculturation* (1945).

In his studies he described extensively about the social and cultural life of these tribal communities and paid special attention to their problems and recommended welfare measures for the tribal development. In his work Haimendr of highlighted the tribals' land alienation problems in Adilabad district. Major problems and struggles faced by these tribals include curtailment of their rights by the forest department, snatching of their agricultural lands by the new 'voortekkers' and moving of non-tribals into tribals areas (Furer-Haimendr of, 1985). These classic ethnographic studies will provide models for future anthropologists. Learners must read the above ethnographies.

During the constructive phase two important institutions were established:

- Anthropological Survey of India in 1945,
- Department of Anthropology at University of Delhi in 1947.

These institutions played significant roles in the development and advancement of anthropological research.

Analytical phase (1950-1990): The work of anthropological research underwent drastic change. In the formative phase ethnographic work was dominated by administrators which were lacking in quality. But after independence the focus and interest of foreign as well as trained Indian anthropologists shifted from tribes to caste.

The work scenario of social anthropology completely changed in analytical phase (1950-1990). During this phase Indian anthropologists started collaborative work with foreign scholars. In this period renowned anthropologists and sociologists such as Morris Opher, Oscar Lewis and David Mandelbaum and their students came to India from America to study

Indian society and culture. Many of these scholars did their fieldwork in Indian villages and tested their hypothesis on the village studies. This period was termed as analytical phase because of the shift from descriptive tribal studies to analytical village and castes studies of complex societies.

For D.N. Majumdar this period began in 1938 and for Surajit Sinha this is recent phase. D.N. Majumdar contributed significantly to Indian anthropology and used the holistic-functional approach for studying the Ho tribe. In the year 1950 he established Department of Anthropology at Lucknow University and also initiated *The Eastern Anthropologists journal*.

Contact between Indian anthropologist and foreign anthropologists occurred after independence. A large number of monographs were published on village studies by foreign and Indian scholars. Indian social anthropologists such as L.P. Vidyarthi, D. N. Majumdar, M.N. Srinivas, S. C. Dube, B. K. Roy Burman, Makhan Jha, P. K. Misra, K.S. Singh, T. N. Madan, N. K. Bose, T. C. Das, Iravathi Karve, Chattopadhyay and Mukherjee made notable contributions to village and community studies.

The analytical period of anthropological researches marked the beginning of researches on Indian tribes, castes, villages and urban cities of both orthogenetic and heterogenetic natures. Marriot (1958) developed the concepts of “network and centers” to understand the dimension of Indian civilization. L.P. Vidyarthi, who was a follower of the Chicago School of thought, developed a concept called ‘sacred complex’ to analyze the contribution and importance of traditional centers of Indian civilization in a systematic way. He conducted his study in the famous Hindu religious pilgrimage spot of Bihar called Gaya. This resulted as a book called *The Sacred Complex of Hindu Gaya* in 1961. The concept sacred complex describes in detail three analytical concepts:

- a sacred geography,
- a set of sacred performances, and
- a corps of sacred specialists which are collectively termed as sacred complex.

The concept has played an integrating role by providing a meeting place of different kinds of peoples and traditions, of castes and sects, of classes and statuses. The concepts of “sacred complex” and “networks and centers” discussed similar theme conceptually. Methodologically the concept unfolds channels of cultural transmission which helps in the integration of civilization. These concepts became very popular theoretical models in anthropological literature for studying the traditional places of pilgrimage and the religious complex of the simple societies in India. He extended this study to understand the tribals’ relationship with the nature. He was of opinion that simple societies and tribes were isolated from the mainstream of civilization. The Great Tradition had never been a part of their lives. In order to study such communities he developed the concept Nature-Man-Spirit complex. He found this complex to be of great value not only to study the Maler of Rajmahals hills but also in understanding the issues related to applied anthropology.

M. N. Srinivas in his book *Social Change in Modern India* (1966) developed the *sanskritization* concept. He defined *sanskritization* as “the process by

which a low caste or tribe or other group takes over the customs, rituals, ideology and style of life of a high and, in particular, a twice-born (*dwij*) caste". In simple terms *sanskritization* means people of lower caste imitate people of higher caste (cultural mobility) owing to their improvement in the economic or political position resulting from their contact with a source of the Great Tradition of Hinduism such as pilgrim centers. M.N.Srinivas gave examples from the Ramgharias of Punjab, the Chamars of Uttar Pradesh, the Oraons of Bihar, the Bhils of Rajasthan, and the Gonds of Madhya Pradesh and said that they have all tried to *sanskritize* their way of life.

Evaluative phase (1990 to present): due to shift in anthropological research new sub-fields emerged in social anthropology. For example, anthropologists from School of Chicago such as Robert Redfield, Mckim Marriott, and Milton Singer studied the interaction between the Little and Great tradition as well as 'Folk-Urban Continuum' to understand the dimensions of Indian civilization.

Robert Redfield developed concepts such as "The Great and Little Traditions", "cultural specialists", "style of life", "cultural performances" and "cultural media" to study Indian civilization. He defined civilization in three ways.

- A complex structure of Great and Little traditions. This definition emphasized culture content together with its historical sources and levels of development.
- An organization of a special kind of role-occupiers in characteristic relation to one another, and to lay people performing characteristic functions concerned with the transmission of tradition. This definition made an emphasis on the social structure of traditions (Redfield, 1955).
- With Singer, he proposed another definition of civilization in terms of self-axis, that is, in terms of a characteristic world-view, ethos, temperament, value system, cultural personality (Redfield, 1955). This definition represents the shift of description from products of culture to its psychological characterisation.

McKim Marriot (1955) developed the concept of Universalization and Parochialization to put his idea *Little Communities in an Indigenous Civilization* as a sequel to Robert Redfield's Great Tradition and Little Tradition". He examined the socio-religious organization in an Indian village named Kishan Garhi in Uttar Pradesh to put forth his view. According to Marriot, the concept of universalization refers to the "carrying forward of materials which are already present in the little tradition which it encompasses" (1955). The opposite process, which he called parochialization, is defined by him as the "downward devolution of great traditional elements and their integration with little traditional elements. It is a process of localization" (ibid). Thus, Marriot has perceptively christened two contrasting, yet complementary processes of cultural growth of the indigenous civilization in India as Universalization and Parochialization. Finally, he pointed out that these processes are by their nature, not restricted to the Hindu culture, but are applicable to all cultures having the dimensions of the great and little traditions.

During the analytical phase, Indian anthropologists such as N. K. Bose, D. N. Majumdar, and L. P. Vidyarthi studied the impact of industrialization on

tribals. Social anthropology also developed the sub-field of urban anthropology during this phase. Social anthropology was also included into many different fields, for example, Sheth's work on 'Social Framework of an Indian Factory (1970) fall into the subfield of anthropology and management.

Growth and development of Indian anthropology in the areas of medical anthropology, religion, development and psychological studies, tribal development studies, studies on ethnic identities, folklore studies applied and action research studies are more evident. After having work experiences in the above areas many Indian and foreign anthropologists helped the government in planning of economic development and social reconstruction of the country.

The above scholars while studying Indian villages developed the following distinct research methodology such as:

- Genealogical Method,
- Spatial Distribution Technique,
- Statistics,
- Text Analysis,
- Concept of Sacred Center,
- Cluster,
- Segment.

Social anthropologists moved ahead from communities' studies to complex segments like caste politics, caste power relationship with social structure, without losing their identity as anthropologist. Unlike in the west, in India, from the very beginning, sociology had a close relationship with social anthropology. The evaluative phase of anthropology brought both the discipline very close because both of the disciplines were doing research on socio-cultural aspects of tribal, rural, peasants, and industrial societies.

In the evaluate phase Indian scholars had an opinion that western anthropology has failed to explain the complexity of Indian society. In order to understand complex culture, Indian scholars developed indigenous models and alternative methodology which not only helped in establishing a refined concept but also aimed at 'Indigenesness' for maintaining the quality of National life. In fact, anthropologists in India were demanding rather an active, humanistic and critical outlook towards subject matter in order to overcome the barrier of intellectual colonialism and neo-colonialism.

Check Your Progress 2

2) Describe the new areas of research in anthropology.

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5.2 GROWTH OF PHYSICAL/BIOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY IN INDIA

The growth and development of physical/biological anthropology in India can be traced back to the 19th Century. In the beginning attempts were made to study the physical features of tribal people. The research investigation began with the anthropometric measurements. Anthropometric research was carried out to study and differentiate physical features of different ethnic groups and to predict the possible origins of the population.

During the formative phase the physical/biological anthropology in India was dominated by anthropometric researches. J. Shroff was the first person to conduct anthropometric study in Nilgiris in Tamilnadu. He studied three different tribes using the necessary dimensions of the head and nose for the calculation of cephalic and nasal indices. The result of his research work was jointly published with Col. Ouchterlony in 1868 that is in formative phase. Risley in 1891 conducted comprehensive survey for most of the provinces of the British India, including Baluchistan, Ceylon and Burma (R.D. Singh 1987). In the area of Uttar Pradesh Surgeon Captain conducted anthropometric research on castes and tribes and published work in 1896. Thurston carried out anthropometric research on a large of number of groups in south India and published in several volumes in 1909.

In the time of constructive phase around 1930s, physical/biological anthropology research was conducted in the field of human genetics in general and human serology in particular. In this period research in physical/biological anthropology was advanced considerably. Physical/biological anthropologists were engaged in racial surveys, anthroposcopic observations, ABO blood group surveys and dermatoglyphic studies. Notable among these are the following anthropologists:

- H. H. Risley gave racial classification of Indian population on the basis of anthropometric survey.
- B.S. Guha carried out racial survey of India as a part of the Census of India 1931.
- N. Majumdar conducted racial survey research in Bengal, U.P. and Gujarat.
- Macfarlane, Chatterjee and Mitra did blood group survey.
- S. S. Sarkar conducted research on genetic and racial surveys.
- I. Karve conducted anthropometric studies in Maharashtra and published work in 1953.

Check Your Progress 3

- 3) In which year B. S. Guha's racial survey was included as a part of Census?

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In physical anthropology the different studies of socio-cultural and genetic variability defined the population of India. India is known for its biological and cultural diversity. Among Indian population due to ethnic diversity the ethnic composition is complex, but predominantly they can be divided into the Aryan, in the north, and the Dravidian, in the south.

India is a land of great cultural diversity, as is evidenced by the enormous number of languages spoken throughout the country, such as Hindi, English and other regional languages. More than 1,500 languages and dialects are spoken in India. The following regional languages are recognized as official languages by Indian constitution: Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Malayalam, Marathi, Oriya, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu, and Urdu.

Indian population is polygenetic and is an amazing amalgamation of various races and cultures. Anthropologists gave racial classification of Indian population by doing anthropometrics and genetic studies.

Anthropologists classified the racial elements in India on the basis of physical characters and anthropometric measurements. For example, H. H. Risley (1915) classified Indian population into the following races:

- Dravidian,
- Indo-Aryan,
- Mongoloid,
- Aryo-Dravidian,
- Mongolo-Dravidian,
- Scytho-Dravidian,
- Turko-Dravidian.

B. S. Guha (1937) classified the Indian population into the following races:

- Negrito,
- Proto-Australoid,
- Mongoloid (Palaeo-Mongoloid, long-headed, broad-headed, Tibeto-Mongoloid),
- Mediterranean (Palaeo-mediterranean, Mediterranean, Oriental),
- Western brachycephals (Alpinoid, Armenoid, Dinaric)
- Nordics.

S. S. Sarkar (1961) classified the Indian population into the following races:

- Dolicocephals (Australoid, Indo-Aryan, Mundari-speakers),
- Mesocephals (Irano-Scythian),
- Brachycephals (Far Eastern, Mongolian).

There were lot criticisms on the racial classification of population. Although S.S. Sarkar's classification was more convincing than any other classification

but contemporary anthropologists are still trying to solve the problem of racial classification of India.

B. S. Guha worked on several tribes of India especially the tribes of Assam, Bengal and Meghalaya. In Anthropological Survey of India he did research on osteological studies of historic and prehistoric human remains and materials excavated by Archaeological Survey of India. He gained expertise in racial survey of the Indian population and contributed to the creation of a racial map of India for 1931 Census operations. In order to do this he collected anthropometric measurements of subjects from various parts of the country. As Special Research Officer of the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C. he worked in United States among the Utes and the Navajos of Colorado and New Mexico in 1921. He was strong believer of fieldwork and advocated it strongly. He wrote various reports on human remains excavated at Nal in 1929 and Mohenjodaro in 1931 and 1937.

Among his published works were the following:

- *The Racial Affinities of the Peoples of India in Census of India 1931, (1935)*
- *Racial Elements in the Population (1944).*

D. N. Majumdar, not only specialized in social anthropology, he also contributed to the sub-fields of physical anthropology and pre-history. In physical anthropology, he researched on blood groups, anthropometric surveys and statistical analysis of serological, health and disease. He carried out lot of physical anthropology work in Uttar Pradesh and tried to find the biometrical correlates of caste hierarchy. He opposed the concept of race and was not in the favour of single factor explanations of caste studies. He also conducted studies on school children of Lucknow state and published on Race elements in Bengal.

According to scholars from disciplines such as mathematics and statistics also joined the branch of physical/biological anthropology and helped to standardize the tools and techniques of the discipline and to scientifically validate the research hypotheses. This greatly helped in achieving the accuracy in accordance to the requirements of the research.

After the establishment of Anthropological Survey of India and Department of Anthropology at University of Delhi research in Physical/Biological Anthropology shifted to skeletal remains. Most of the skeletal remains were excavated from Mohenjodaro and Taxila. Anthropological survey of India played a major role in collecting the skeletal remains.

In the analytical phase, physical/biological anthropology was primarily involved in the following:

- interpretation of human remains.
- genetics of blood groups,
- serological studies,
- genetic adaptations
- relationship between blood groups and diseases.

In recent years, the focal area of research in physical/biological anthropology is conducting research in the field of human health and genetics.

In past two-three decades a number of studies have reported gene frequencies of one or more traditional genetic markers on many Indian populations. Bhasin along with other researchers (1992) compiled the gene frequencies for different markers from different studies on Indian populations. In this study attempt was also made to find some patterns in average gene frequencies of groups of populations defined by geography, language, ethnicity and occupation (Bhasin et al. 1994; Bhasin and Walter, 2001). A few studies have attempted studying different populations of India using the genetic and anthropometric markers at regional and local level (Tripathy et al., 2008).

Check Your Progress 4

- 4) In the constructive phase what were the focal research areas of physical/biological anthropology?

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5.3 GROWTH OF PREHISTORIC/ ARCHAEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY IN INDIA

The formative phase of Indian pre-historic/archeological anthropology began in the year 1863 when Robert Bruce Foote discovered stone tools of Paleolithic period. Robert Bruce belongs to the discipline of geology and discovered the stone tools from Pallavaram near Chennai. He also reported many pre-historic sites in southern peninsula and Gujarat. In this period many scholars, mostly from other fields, emerged who probed into the human remains.

The Archeological Survey of India was established in 1861, during the period of formative phase of anthropology, when research was conducted on historical aspects. After three decades it entered into the research of pre-history and proto-history. Until then anthropologist were working on pre-history to understand human past.

The turning point in pre-historic/archeological anthropology study came when Yale-Cambridge expedition carried out their work in Kashmir valley, Potwar Plateau, Narmada Valley and Madras Coast. In this discovery they brought out the evidence of new Palaeolithic culture from Soan in the Potwar Plateau of Himalayas. In 1922 at the time period of constructive phase prehistory was made a component in the Department of Anthropology at Calcutta University. D. Sen was a part of the above expedition from this university (V. N. Misra 1985).

The first excavation of Palaeolithic deposits was carried out by (1948) of Calcutta University at Kuliana in Mayurbhanj, Orissa. D. N. Majumdar wrote a report on the human remains excavated at Nal in 1929 and in Mohenjodaro in 1931 and 1937. Dharani P. Sen was a specialist in prehistoric archeology,

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Pleistocene stratigraphy and Stone Age culture and chronology. He also researched on human environments of West Punjab (Pakistan), East Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir, Poonch and Chennai. He also excavated Stone Age sites in Mayurbhanj (Orissa) and Singhbhum (Jharkhand) and explored sites in Narmada Valley and Mirzapur.

In the analytical phase during early 1940's Archeological Survey of India organized expedition under the leadership of H.D Sankalia at the work site of Bruce Foote in Gujarat. In this site they discovered new Palaeolithic and Mesolithic sites and remains of Acheulian culture in the Sabarmati valley of Mehsana district. Sankalia also jointly excavated Langhnaj, the famous Mesolithic site with Iravati Karve, finding microlithic and other tools as well as faunal remains and human burials. In 1920s and 1930s Archeological Survey of India (ASI) made discoveries in Indus Civilization in Sind and Punjab. Since then hardly any activity has taken place in the field of pre-historic archeology.

Before independence all the prehistoric research work in India was carried out by ASI. Apart from ASI some archeological works are carried out by Calcutta University and Deccan College Research Institute. Other significant developments of analytical phase include the appointment of H.D. Sankalia as professor (1940) in the Department of Archeology at Deccan College and appointment of R.E.M Wheeler as Director General of ASI (1944).

H. D. Sankalia conducted many excavations in India and made contribution to the Indian prehistory with his discoveries. He also started the field of proto-history in peninsular India. Later on his students contributed to Palaeolithic and Mesolithic culture by finding significant remains. Among such students Malti Nagar worked on ethno-archeology and Yashodhar Mathpal worked on the cave art. R.E.M. Wheeler trained many young Indian archeologists who made important contributions to the institution. Among such the following are the main contributors:

- S. R. Rao's excavation of the Harrappan sites of Lothal and Rangpur of Gujarat.
- B. B. Lal's excavation at Hastinapur in U.P. and discovery of Painted Grey Ware cultures.
- B.K. Thapar's excavation at the Chalcolithic site of Prakash in Dhule district.
- M. N. Deshpande's excavation at the Chalcolithic sites of Bahal in Jalgaon district.
- Y. D. Sharma's excavation at the Harrappan site of Ropar.
- B. B. Lal's excavation of the Mesolithic of Birbhanpur in Burdwan district.

Check Your Progress 5

5) When was the Archaeological Survey of India established?

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Gradually after 1947 there was phenomenal expansion of prehistoric activity in India. Apart from ASI many universities played important roles in teaching and research areas of prehistoric/archeological anthropology. In India, the term for prehistory is archeological anthropology whereas in the US the term anthropological archeology is used.

Two important organizations, the Indian Archeological Society and the Indian Society for Prehistoric and Quarternary Studies firmly emerged on the horizon of Indian prehistory with their research journals. The published content of these journals reflect the growing trend towards inter-disciplinary research and a shift from the traditional history-oriented archaeology to anthropology-oriented studies.

5.4 SUMMARY

Anthropological studies in India began in the second half of the 19th century. During this period British administrators and anthropologists conducted studies and published number of monographs on Indian tribal and other communities. Establishment of departments of anthropology was gradually done in various universities from the formative phase to analytical phase. In the beginning very few Indian anthropologists published their work about the Indian culture.

The landmark in the history of anthropology in India is the setting up of the Asiatic Society in 1784 by Sir William Jones. Putting the views of notable anthropologists together, the growth of anthropology in India can be divided into four phases

- formative period,
- constructive period,
- analytical period, and
- evaluative period.

During the **Formative Phase** anthropological work emphasized tribes, a natural history approach and descriptions of the diversity of customs, traditions, and values.

In the **Constructive Phase** Indian anthropology was characterized by ethnological and monographic studies with a special emphasis on social institution.

The **Analytical Phase** of Indian anthropology saw a paradigm shift from the descriptive studies of preliterate villages to the analytical studies of complex societies.

Anthropology as a discipline began to study Indian villages, tribes, castes, urban and sacred cities. In the process of understanding Indian civilization many researchers developed concepts such as Sanskritization, Parochialization, Universalization and Sacred Complex through which exchange of cultural elements take place.

During the **Evaluative Phase** Indian anthropologists started looking critically to the works of others and self. During this period Indian anthropologists had keen interest in various subfields such as medical anthropology, religion, development studies, and psychological studies.

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5.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) According to D. N. Majumdar and L. P. Vidyarthi, the growth of Indian anthropology can be divided into three phases. For further details kindly refer section 5.1

Check Your Progress 2

- 2) Refer to section 5.1

Check Your Progress 3

- 3) B. S. Guha's racial survey was included in 1931 as a part of Census.

Check Your Progress 4

- 4) Refer to section 5.2

Check Your Progress 5

- 5) Archaeological Survey of India was established in 1861.

UNIT 6 FIELDWORK TRADITION IN ANTHROPOLOGY*

Contents

- 6.0 Introduction
- 6.1 Criticism of Arm-chair Anthropology
- 6.2 The Importance of Fieldwork
- 6.3 History of Fieldwork
- 6.4 Contributions of A. R. Radcliffe-Brown and Bronislaw K. Malinowski
- 6.5 Fieldwork in the 21st Century
- 6.6 Ethics in Fieldwork
- 6.7 Summary
- 6.8 References
- 6.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

Learning Objectives

In this unit, you will learn about the:

- genesis of fieldwork in social/cultural anthropology;
- contributions of A.R. Radcliffe-Brown and Bronislaw K. Malinowski in developing fieldwork traditions in social/cultural anthropology; and
- change in the concept of field during 21st century.

6.0 INTRODUCTION

Social anthropology is an observational, comparative and generalizing science. The meaning of this statement is:

- 1) data are collected by making use of the techniques of observation on a small unit (say, a society, community, neighborhood, group, or an institution);
- 2) propositions about the entire society are abstracted from this observational study (social anthropology is an inductive science of society, where we move from the particular to the general);
- 3) in addition, data from different societies are meticulously subjected to comparison to find out the commonalities and differences among different societies, or the units on which the study is being conducted; and
- 4) an attempt is made to arrive at a set of generalizations about the unit of study.

* Contributed by Prof. Vinay Kumar Srivastava, Director, Anthropological Survey of India, Kolkata

At one time, these generalisations attempted from a comparative study were called ‘laws’ (that is, the ‘laws of the working of society’). Today, the word ‘law’ has been dropped, mainly because we have realised that it is not possible to derive laws in social sciences, as we could do in natural and biological sciences. Human behaviour has a great deal of variability than what one finds in natural and biological phenomena. However, the idea of arriving at ‘what is common to all the units under study’ continues. In this unit we try to understand the need of fieldwork in anthropology. In this unit we study the history of radical change in fieldwork traditions from arm-chair anthropology to the field where the day-to-day activities of the human beings are observed and recorded through fieldwork. We also study how fieldwork and field is conceptualized in the 21st century and the ethical concerns in the field that an anthropologists encounters.

6.1 CRITICISM OF ARM-CHAIR ANTHROPOLOGY

An anthropological study is not based on contemplation or imaginative thinking. In the formative era of anthropology, those scholars who did not carry out any empirical study themselves but wholly relied on the information that was collected by others (such as travellers, missionaries, army personnel, photojournalists), often haphazardly, were rather derogatorily termed as ‘arm-chair anthropologists’. It meant that rather than confronting the reality themselves, they were just imagining it to be what they thought was logically possible, or could have been possible at one time, by basing them on the biased, exaggerated, and prejudiced information that was gathered by unskilled, lay persons. Often, their purpose was to shock the western world with the existence of odd and peculiar practices of the non-western people.

Once the tradition of the ‘arm-chair anthropology’ was rejected, the approach that came up was the first-hand study of a society. It meant that the anthropologist was also the data-collector, not just an analyst and interpreter of the information that hitherto had been gathered.

Today anthropologists collect their data from real societies. They live with the people in their natural habitats, collect, analyze and interpret the data to have an understanding of the structure and function of society. This real-time knowledge of society is also essential to bring about any kind of change in society. We must know what the reality is – what the society is like – before we think in terms of the changes that are likely to be introduced.

It was noted in the past that many programmes of change and many innovative projects (some of which seemed to be promising) were rejected by people because these were not in line with the customs and practices of the people and did not reflect their aspirations and demands. Thus, people rejected the proposed or introduced changes without hesitation because of their alien nature. On finding people unresponsive, in some cases, the state and the change-producing agencies thought that the people were inert and passive, and were unaware of the long-term benefits of the changes, and thus would accept the changes and innovations only when these were imposed on them, sometimes forcibly. In some such cases coercion was regarded as a reasonable method of making people change.

This view was strongly opposed by the anthropologists who thought that changes were rejected because they were introduced without the knowledge of the social life of the people. Unless the pressing needs and requirements of the people were addressed, the best programmes introduced with the best intent were destined to rejection.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) “Arm-chair anthropologists were fieldworkers.” State whether the statement is true or false?

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6.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF FIELDWORK

The best way to know people and their reality, which has become central to social anthropological work, is fieldwork. Incidentally, one of the main contributions of social anthropology to other fields of knowledge, not only in social but also in natural and biological sciences, is in terms of the methodology of fieldwork. Today, other disciplines have introduced courses on fieldwork in their curricula and are learning the art, lore and science of fieldwork from anthropologists.

In this connection we may quote Henri Bergson, who said: “There are two ways of knowing a phenomenon: one by going round it, and the other by going inside it.” The methodology of fieldwork argues in favour of going inside a phenomenon and understanding it from within, what is known as the “insider’s view”. Fieldwork is a method of data collection in which the investigator lives with the people in their natural habitat and learns from within by becoming a member of that society.

Anthropologists have also realised the difference that exists between:

- what people think,
- what people say,
- what people do,
- what people think they ought to have done.

If anthropologists are just asking questions and noting down people’s replies, as happens in the method called ‘survey’, it will belike largely collecting information on ‘what people say they do’. It is highly likely that they may not be doing what they are saying. They may be giving the normatively correct and socially desirable replies. In other words, what they are saying may not be the truth. Anthropologists have on record many cases of this type. For instance, a respondent, a pharmacist by profession, may be boasting of his adherence to the value of honesty, but the anthropologist living in his house finds out that the same man is in fact stealing medicines from the hospital where he is working and selling them to his clients whom he is

treating illegally. This is what Paul Bohannon found out in his study of the Bunyoro. Anthropologists come to know what the reality is when they live with people for a considerable period of time and come face-to-face with their actual ways of living and not the ones they describe, which may be an 'ideal' way, or what they think should be the right way of living.

6.3 HISTORY OF FIELDWORK

The methodology of fieldwork has evolved over time with its own rules and procedures. Initially, as we learned previously, anthropology was not field-oriented. The speedy growth of anthropology took place after the publication of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* in 1859. Anthropologists were inspired to study the evolution of society and culture from its beginning. Thus, the first approach in anthropology was the evolutionary approach, which was concerned with the evolution of society, its institutions and their forms, answering questions such as the following:

- why these institutions came into existence (the issue of origin) and
- what were the stages through which they passed to reach their contemporary form (the sequence of evolution).

As said earlier, the early scholars, who later identified themselves as anthropologists, relied rather uncritically upon the information available in travel accounts and administrative reports. It is surprising that it did not occur to many early scholars that they should visit societies in the non-western world before writing on them, although some of them (like Edward Tylor and Lewis Morgan) did visit the communities of the so-called 'primitive people'. British anthropologists E.B. Tylor (1832-1917), an advocate of the theory of human development (evolutionism), assisted an amateur archaeologist in his field expedition to Mexico in the mid-1850s. In 1861 Tylor published his first work *Anahuac, or Mexico and the Mexicans, Ancient and Modern* based on this fieldwork. American anthropologist L.H. Morgan (1818-1881), working on evolutionism and a contemporary of Tylor, gave us the concept of kinship. He worked among the Iroquois while working on legal matters regarding the Iroquois and published his findings in the book called *League of the Iroquois* in 1851.

Travels to the unknown parts of the world began from the fourteenth century. With the passage of time, with an improvement in travel facility, these visits started increasing in number and so did the travel accounts. The earlier anthropologists took these materials into account for building up their theories of origin and evolution. In other words, they did not carry out any first-hand study among these communities.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, museums were gradually developing. In all these museums, a section on the ethnology of people was added. For collecting objects of material culture, which might be housed in museums, many excursions were organised and sent to the tribal areas. Their job was not only to collect the material things but also to provide a write-up on each of the material objects thus collected. In this way under the garb of museum excursions, some kind of fieldwork came into existence. British anthropologists W.H.R. Rivers (1864-1922) and A.C. Haddon (1855-1940) carried out field expedition to the Torres Straits in the Pacific, Australia

in 1898. American anthropologist Franz Boas (1858-1942) did his fieldwork among the Eskimos in Baffin Island, Canada in 1883.

By the close of the nineteenth century, the evolutionary approach came under sharp criticisms for not collecting the facts but rather relying upon the travel accounts. The evolutionary theory was criticised for the paucity of data and the need was felt to collect first-hand data about cultural facts. A general dissatisfaction with evolutionary theory surfaced when it was demonstrated that many of the institutions of modern societies were also found among the primitive people. For instance, monogamy and nuclear family were also found in simple societies. Therefore, how could one say that these institutions had evolved over time, from promiscuity and group marriage, as Morgan believed?

All these factors led to an important shift in the approach of the anthropologists. Rather than relying upon the travel accounts, the anthropologist preferred to carry out a first-hand study of the people and learn the culture the way it was led and understood by its bearers. Once fieldwork came into existence it became the hallmark of the anthropological work.

6.4 CONTRIBUTIONS OF A. R. RADCLIFFE- BROWN AND BRONISLAW K. MALINOWSKI

One of the first well-known field studies was A.R. Brown's work on the Andaman Islanders. Brown, who later became Radcliffe-Brown, spent two years (1906-08) with these people and wrote his Master's dissertation, submitted in 1910, based on the information he had collected. Although it was largely a functional study, that is to say, it was an account of Andamanese society as an integrated whole, it also had several instances where the author looked at how cultural traits had diffused. In other words, Brown's work was also concerned with diffusionism and the reason for this was that he was a student of W.H.R. Rivers, who was one of the famous diffusionists of his times. Brown's fieldwork was not exemplary, but he definitely showed that a first-hand study of society was essential to dispel all beliefs about the people that the evolutionists had held.

Check Your Progress 2

- 2) Where did A.R. Radcliffe-Brown conduct one of the first well-known field study?

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The person who laid down the premises of fieldwork was Bronislaw Malinowski, a scholar of Polish origin, who studied anthropology under C.G. Seligman. He carried out a piece of intensive fieldwork with Trobriand Islanders. He spent close to 31 months with these people:

- from August 1914 to March 1915,
- from May 1915 to May 1916,
- from October 1917 to October 1918.

In 1922, Malinowski published a book on *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* that provided an analysis of the system of different kinds of exchanges in the Trobriand society. Malinowski lived in the midst of the people; he pitched his tent in the village of Omarakana, and collected all his information by learning the language the people spoke. Brown, on the other hand, mainly collected his data with the aid of translators and interpreters.

Malinowski, in his writings, always maintained the importance of learning the local language of the people. He believed that the cultural concepts of the people cannot be grasped without knowing their language. The following principles were extracted from Malinowski's summary account of Trobriand culture, wherein he gave observations on how field work should be carried out:

- 1) The ethnographer should observe the same kind of behaviour over a length of time and should also observe it occurring at different points of time. He should not just rely upon its solitary instance, for it may be atypical. The objective of this rule is to rule out any atypical element or idiosyncrasy in social action. Our job is to understand whether a particular type of behaviour is typical in the society or is highly personal. Our interest is not in the individual, but in understanding the collective behaviour of the community. That is why the same type of behaviour must be observed over a length of time to discover the common features that exist in all its instances. This is called the method of 'concrete, statistical documentation' of human action.

Activity

To understand the essence of observation you can carry out your own observations for example while travelling by bus/metro/train observe how people behave. How they interact with each other or don't interact. How people converse on the phone in public places. Note down the different types of behaviour you observe.

- 2) The early travellers, who came from the western world, to the areas of the-so-called 'primitive' people laid their eyes upon the study of the oddities, strange customs, and manners, which their cultures did not have. They were mainly interested in identifying the differences between these people and the westerners. Thus, it was obvious that they did not pay any attention to the everyday life of the people. In comparison to this approach of 'selective study', it was argued that we should study the everyday life of people, the things which are generally taken for granted. Our job is to study the entire society, the relationship between its different parts and the way they all function together. Therefore, the need is to know the whole, rather than some of its parts, which excite interest among the visitors. The advice is to study each and every aspect of the society rather than those which appear peculiar and strange.

- 3) Malinowski says that the ethnographer lives in the village, or the site of his study, with ‘no other business but to follow native life’, to observe it as closely as possible, the ‘customs, ceremonies and transactions over and over again’. There are several phenomena that cannot be recorded by questioning them but have to be observed as they take place. For example, Malinowski includes in this list the ‘routine of a man’s working day, the details of the care of his body, of the manner of taking food and preparing it, the tone of conversational and social life around the village fires’. These occurrences, which Malinowski calls the ‘imponderabilia of social life’, need to be observed, their subtleness need to be meticulously recorded.
- 4) We should note down the exact words in which people communicate their thoughts, ideas and beliefs. These ‘ethnographic statements, characteristic narratives, typical utterances, items of folklore, and magical formulae’ should be recorded as a whole. The collection of these constitutes what Malinowski calls a ‘corpus inscriptionism’, which guides us to the understanding of the ‘mentality’ of people. Each word needs to be culturally understood and analysed. Language is the mirror of culture.
- 5) The objective of an anthropological investigation, Malinowski says, is to “*grasp the native’s point of view, his relation to life, to realize his vision of his world*”. Each culture has its own set of values, the ways of doing things, and it gives a distinct meaning to the lives of people; in other words, the hold of each culture on the lives of its people is different. If we look at this as an outsider – from an outsider’s perspective we shall never be able to understand it, for our values would come into play, and we would end up providing a biased and prejudiced view. Thus, the anthropologist has to step inside the ‘heads of the people’ under study and understand it from ‘inside’.

Malinowski laid down the basic premises of fieldwork. For a long time, he provided training in how fieldwork should be carried out. His disciples carried out the same brand of fieldwork, a lengthy period of stay with people in their natural habitat with an attempt to understand their institutions and points of view. Gradually, fieldwork based on Malinowski’s example became central to today’s anthropology. Although Malinowski did not coin the term ‘participant observation’, his entire work dealt with observing people by trying to participate as much as was possible in their day-to-day life.

Check Your Progress 3

- 3) Discuss the principles of fieldwork that emerged from the Malinowski’s fieldwork on Trobriand Islanders.

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6.5 FIELDWORK IN THE 21st CENTURY

Till now we have been discussing about how fieldwork emerged in anthropological studies and its relevance and importance. Let us now see if we are still following the traditional patterns of conducting fieldwork. Within anthropological studies with the passage of time and the changes that have taken place fieldwork has undergone lot of changes. Fieldwork today no longer means going off on an expedition to a far off place or living among the natives. The field itself is fast changing. Rarely, we would find a society in its pristine form and living on its own in absolute seclusion. Anthropologists, though primarily concerned with the lesser known societies, are also taking into consideration the developed and the developing societies.

Today anthropological fieldwork takes into account not only the 'others' but also the 'self' as anthropologists are now writing about their lived experiences. In today's scenario field could be an institution, an organization in which the focus of anthropologists is on the work culture and behavioral patterns. The field can be a rural or an urban site. Owing to the many ethical issues that have emerged in the work of the colonial fieldworkers, many of the native anthropologists have taken it upon themselves to restudy and study their own societies. Thus, anthropologists today are also working among one's own people.

Today, the virtual space is also a matter of concern for the anthropologists as human kind are carrying out much of their activities online. The virtual world has thus become a field for the anthropologists. Fieldwork can be multi-sited too. In multi-sited fieldwork the researcher conducts fieldwork in more than one site where the subject can be found. Serena Nanda's work on the *hijras in India* is a classic example of multi-sited fieldwork where she took into account the hijras living in different parts of India. A recent trend in anthropological fieldwork is researching the 'self' known as auto-ethnography where the fieldworker narrates the lived experiences of his/her life.

6.6 ETHICS IN FIELDWORK

Ethics are basically the moral principles that govern a person's behaviour towards the self and others while performing an activity. Anthropological fieldwork involves interactions with human beings where at times the researcher has to deal with sensitive data or information. Ethical issues are thus a major concern in anthropological fieldwork. The problem might begin with the selection of topic right till the presentation of the data in the form of a written report or a dissertation. Today, for example, while clicking a photograph it can also lead to an ethical issue of whether the consent of the person involved had been taken or not. Fieldwork is a part of a researcher's way of gathering information and it is the fieldworker who in a way intrudes into the lives of the people. Thus, a researcher has to be very diligent and skilled in collection and dissemination of data. While in field, the researcher needs to take into account four basic attributes related to data collection:

- 1) Confidentiality of sensitive issues which needs to be protected,
- 2) Consent of the people under study before embarking on data collection,
- 3) Utility concerns allowing the use of the data for the betterment of the community and the society at large and

- 4) Knowledge and its transmission involving the rights of the community under study as the patent for their indigenous knowledge while maintaining the authenticity of the data.

6.7 SUMMARY

Anthropology is a field-based subject. The sub-discipline social/cultural anthropology has got methods of study in which fieldwork plays a very important role. In the beginning of anthropological studies, scholars known as arm-chair anthropologists depended on accounts brought in by travellers, adventurers etc. about the different groups of people and culture they came across at different parts of the world. Scholars built theories on the basis of such information. It was gradually felt that information which was collected by having direct contact with the people produced fruitful result for the study of society and culture and for any change to be brought in. Scientific methodology for fieldwork developed from the end of nineteenth century. A. R. Radcliffe-Brown and B. Malinowski contributed greatly to the development of proper methods and techniques of data collection in the field along with the analysis of data. They also explained how the findings and result of the study can be applied for betterment of the society. In socio-cultural anthropology, the methods of investigation are developing day-by-day.

In the unit 12 we will discuss how to conduct a fieldwork. The steps involved right from the time of inception of an idea for a topic of study, to the types of preparation required for going to the field, conducting fieldwork and finally disseminating the results in the form of a report or dissertation.

6.8 REFERENCES

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6.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) No. The arm-chair anthropologists did not conduct field studies.

Check Your Progress 2

- 2) A.R. Radcliffe-Brown conducted a famous field study in Andaman Islands.

Check Your Progress 3

- 3) For the answer on the principles of Malinowski's fieldwork, refer to the five principles discussed in the section 11.4

