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INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY

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BLOCK 1 INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Introduction

This block consists of three units-dealing with nature, meaning and scope of social anthropology, philosophical and historical foundations of social anthropology, and relationship of social anthropology with other disciplines.

Social anthropology had a systematic beginning in the late 19th century. Inspired by the increasing popularity of the idea of evolution after the publication of Darwins' *The Origin of Species*, a few scholars belonging to different academic fields engaged themselves in exploring the possibility of a similar process of evolution in the field of society and culture. As a corollary of this interest, they got themselves interested in the study of primitive societies in the conviction that these represented the earliest conditions of human society and cultures. All of them who got involved in the comparative study of primitive societies and cultures at that time with the intention of studying the origin and evolution of culture preferred the use of 'ethnologists' for themselves. Ethnology may therefore be defined as the comparative study of primitive cultures in historical perspectives. Gradually, when the study of society and culture became systematic and took the form of a discipline, social/cultural anthropology emerged and named as such in British and American traditions respectively.

The second unit in the block introduces the philosophical and historical roots of anthropology especially social anthropology. It discusses several important aspects of the problem foremost of which was the beginning of the possibility of a scientific study of society providing you, in a summarised form, the thoughts of philosophers and scholars such as David Hume, John Lock, Thomas Hobbes, Rousseau and some others. It also deals with the contributions of the French philosopher Montesquieu who is usually regarded as the first social thinker to have a systematic theory about society, Comte and his positivist view of society, Saint Simon, and Durkheim. Making a journey through time Herbert Spencer, McLennan, and Maine along with Tylor and Morgan laid the foundation of social anthropology.

You are being provided herewith a sound idea of social anthropology as a discipline, its' meaning and scope and the distinction between social and cultural anthropology. You will also read the methods of social anthropology and how these evolved. Outside Britain and USA, India has been an important centre of social anthropology where the discipline developed under the shadow of colonial rule, used by the British administrators to further their interests. In the post-independence period, social anthropology in India decolonised itself and is trying to respond to the challenges of modernisation of the traditional Indian society by developing new insights and tools of study. Presently, new horizons are being explored in Indian anthropology.

It is very important for you to understand the relationship of social anthropology with other disciplines. The third unit will further enrich your understanding of the subject in relation to sociology, psychology, history, economics, and other social sciences besides its relationship and interface with cultural studies, management and even literature. Thus, you would be able to understand how social anthropology is able to relate with a variety of disciplines for an understanding of human behaviour and culture in totality.

UNIT 1 SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY: NATURE AND SCOPE

Contents

Learning Objectives

The unit will enable you to understand:

➢ what does social anthropology mean;

➢ the subject matter of social anthropology;

➢ how social anthropology had developed;

➢ the journey of social anthropology in India; and

➢ future perspective and present scenario.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This unit will trace the emergence of social anthropology and its scope. It is important to know the development and scope of social anthropology as a subject. We know social anthropology today has many stages of development. The subject has not obtained today's form overnight. It has many theoretical debates since its emergence and till today all the matters of debate have not come to an end. So, it is very much important to the students of anthropology to understand these issues and also to know the history related to the subject.

1.2 SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY: A BRANCH OF ANTHROPOLOGY

To understand the emergence of social anthropology as a branch of Anthropology, we need to explore the historical facts related to the debates between social anthropology and cultural anthropology. The term social anthropology has a historical

background in the field of anthropology. We need to explore to some extent the theoretical framework as well to trace the emergence of the term social anthropology. Along with this the term cultural anthropology would also come in our discussion, as these two terms have a close interpretation. Sometimes these two terms overlap in the fields of practice.

Though we have subjective debate over the term social anthropology and cultural anthropology, sometimes we find interchangeable use of these two terms. People use the term socio-cultural anthropology to replace these two terms. But historically there is a debate over the ideology of these two terms and as a student of anthropology we need to know these issues.

Anthropology basically has two dominant schools of thought. One is British school of thought and the other is American school of thought. British school of thought braches out Anthropology into three basic branches

1) Biological or physical anthropology.

2) Social anthropology.

3) Archaeology.

American school defines four branches of Anthropology:

1) Physical anthropology

2) Cultural anthropology.

3) Archaeology

4) Linguistic anthropology.

Thus, we see that there are many issues related to the terminology. It is surrounded with many historical debates. We will try to unfold these debates in our next sections.

1.2.1 What Is Social Anthropology

The most common and basic definition of Anthropology is to say that Anthropology is the study of man across time and space. Anthropology deals with every aspect of human being. It not only studies human beings in present context but also studies human beings journey through the path of evolution from Pleistocene period till today's globalised world and also tries to trace the future path. Anthropology studies man irrespective of any geographical boundary. It studies human being as a whole and also tries to study differences within it. Man is the most wonderful creature in the world with cultural, social, and habitational variation in it. Unlike any other species Homo sapiens represents a diverse population in itself in respect of culture. Culture variation gives a diverse look to the same species Homo sapiens. Biologically defined Homo sapiens are an interbreeding population; but culturally man creates different rules for marriage. Same species does not contain interbreeding population. Cultural prohibition defines matting pattern. Likewise, biologically all the members of the same species i.e. Homo sapiens have equal potentialities in its individuals. But human being differentiates themselves on the basis of race. We can mention many such examples that convince us to define anthropology as a unique science to study man comprising all the differences and similarities within it. Anthropologists find out the differences and at the same time it tries to find out the general characteristics within the same species Homo Sapiens. Anthropology professes systematically to research all the manifestations of human being and human activity in a unified way.

Man live in society following a certain culture pattern. In different societies the culture norms differ. Generally speaking social anthropology deals with the study of this aspect of man. But, as a discipline, social anthropology has different meaning in different countries. Reflecting diversity and variation in human thought we find different thought surrounding social anthropology.

The term social anthropology is generally used in Great Britain and other commonwealth countries. With support from Prof. Claude Levi-Strauss, the term is also extensively used in France, Netherland and the Scandinavian countries. Social anthropology refers to different meaning in the countries like USA, England and the other countries of European continent. So, we often see a diverse nature referred by the term social anthropology in different countries. In Great Britain Anthropology refers to physical anthropology which studies biological aspect of man. In England social anthropology is understood as ethnology or sociology as in other countries of the European continent. In short, in Europe itself social anthropology has two different meanings. On the other hand in USA, social anthropology is considered as a larger and comprehensive discipline. It covers up the study of man from different aspects. It not only considers man as a sociological being but also puts emphasis on the cultural aspect.

In nineteenth century, 'ethnology' was the term used instead of social or cultural anthropology. The Greek term *ethos* means race and *logia* means study. Thus, ethnology was referred to be the study of diverse behaviour of ethnic groups. Cultural distinction covered a major part of such study. Along with this, it also studied culture change. Sometimes, social anthropology is defined in the context of ethnology. Ethnologists, who concentrate on social relations, such as family, and kinship, age groups, political organisation, law and economic activities (what is called social structure) is called social anthropology. Supporting the position of A.R. Radcliffe-Brown the English anthropologists denied the usefulness of historical studies in anthropology and concentrated on social structure. In this context, social anthropology is non historical in their view while ethnology is historical. Distinctly, social anthropology represents the thought following the British school which can rightly be defined as the study of social structure and social organisation.

1.2.2 Cultural Anthropology

The split in socio-cultural Anthropology is not readily accepted all over the world. We have already stated how Social anthropology has different terms of reference in different countries. Likewise the term socio-cultural Anthropology has also different domain of practice in different countries. Cultural anthropology is a term of reference popular in America. In America, the stress on cultural anthropology is laid with the objective that man is more than merely organic man, but a cultural being also. Culture of a particular society helps us to understand civilisation irrespective of time and space. The American cultural anthropology also includes Archaeology. Stress on culture study created a specialty to American school of thought which resulted into the creation of ethnology – the science of people.

Anthropology as knowledge about 'cultivated human' that is, knowledge about those aspects of humanity which are not natural, but which are related to that which is acquired. According to Herskovits, Cultural Anthropology is to study the ways man has devised to cope up with his natural settling and has social milieu and how bodies of customs are learned, retained and handed down from one generation to the next. The term 'culture' itself is a complex one. Culture has been defined by different anthropologists differently. The most accepted and briefed definition of culture can

be stated as 'culture is anything acquired by members of society'. Whatever material and non-material things man has acquired as a member of society that constitutes the subject matter of cultural anthropology. The works of man include everything created by man-traditions, folkways, social institutions and other social networks. Thus, it can be said that American Anthropologists study things not only with cultural orientation but also socially oriented under the domain of cultural anthropology. It can be stated that cultural anthropology is a broader term covering all social aspects of man but emphasises on cultural aspects. For cultural anthropologists, social system is a part of society and culture cannot emerge without a social system. David Bidney says in this context that social and cultural anthropology are then understood as few branches of a common discipline of anthropology, covered with the study of man and his culture in society.

Reflection

Anthropology is a large and diversified subject, which is practiced somewhat differently in different countries, although it retains its distinctive character everywhere. Since the Second World War, the core areas have been Great Britain, the US, France and Australia. British anthropology, which is generally spoken of as social anthropology and which also enjoys a strong position in Scandinavia and India, emphasises the study of social process and is thus close to social anthropology. The British social anthropologist Edmund Leach (1982) once characterised this subject as a comparative micro-sociology. In the US, one speaks of cultural anthropology wherein, the general sociological underpinning characteristics are dominant. On the other hand, linguistics and pre history have formed American anthropology in different ways. Several important specialisations such as cultural, ecology, linguistics anthropology and various approaches in psychological and interpretive or hermeneutic anthropology have developed in the US.

1.2.3 How Social Anthropology Developed

From the very beginning of human life, people have been wondering about themselves and their surroundings. Therefore, it is futile to talk about the beginning of the study of man. For the genesis of systematic thinking all usually refer back to the Greek Civilisation especially to the writings of Herodotus in fifth century B.C. Some also call him 'the father of Anthropology'. He did not merely record what he saw, and what people told him about the different countries around the shores of the Mediterranean. He asked some basic questions which at present is the subject matter of social anthropology like 'what made people so different?'

To trace the development of social anthropology, we will talk about the scholars whose pioneering works gave the shape to the present day discipline 'Social Anthropology'. But to begin with, we will go through the works of different travelers who actually collected the basic data which eventually build the foundation of Ethnographic study. Many early social anthropologists followed these travel accounts to frame their social anthropological study.

Every age of geographical discovery has seen a burst of interest in the new kind of society that the explorers have found. The travelers and also the colonisers considered these newly founded societies as "other culture". The first and foremost thing they recognised about these new society or cultures was that these were completely different from their own society and culture. The explorers and colonisers being accustomed to their own ways, set the standard of what people ought to be like, were always prompted to ask why other people were so unlike themselves. The sixteenth and eighteenth century were such periods. The French essayist Montaigne (1553-92) was much interested in the apparently paradoxical constraints between the customs of his own country and others. Theoretical arguments were also there

at that time whether people with brown skin who wear no cloths could really be descendants of Adam.

Eighteenth century Europeans were less certain than sixteenth century ones that all the advantages were on their side. North America and Polynesia became the point of interest. Rousseau described the Indians as 'noble savage' of the golden age of natural man and interestingly these same people were described by the Spanish missionaries as people having no soul. Hobbes in the seventeenth century had already thought the American Indians approached pretty closely to his imagined state of nature where every man's hand was against his neighbours and man's life were 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short.'

During this period only, the reports of the manner and customs of distant lands collected by these travelers and missionaries began to be treated not just as interesting information about other cultures but a data for constructing historical schemes of the development of society. Some writers started the history of the comparative ethnography with the Jesuit missionary Lifitau, who in 1724 published a book comparing American Indian customs with those of the ancient world as described by Latin and Greek writers. A little later Charles de Brosses wrote on parallels between ancient Egyptian religion and that of West Africa. In 1748 Montesquieu published his *Esprit des Lois*, based on reading and not on travel, and thus became for some the first theorist of social anthropology. He considered that differences in legal systems could be explained by relating them to differences in other characteristics of the nations which possessed them, population, temperament, religious beliefs, economic organisation, and customs generally, as well as to their environment. Considering this we can entitle him to be the first functionalist.

Adam Ferguson and Adam Smith from Scotland based their generalisation, as did Montesquieu, on the widest reading about the institutions of different societies that was available at that time. This perspective of evolution became popular with the discovery of Darwin's principle of natural selection in the evolution of biological species. It greatly influenced the study of society and culture. Before this also the concept of evolution was there. People like Henry de Saint Simor, August Comte, and Herbert Spencer spoke about evolution in philosophical terms. But they didn't offer any empirical evidence of how evolution had taken place. But in the latter half of the nineteenth century we find a set of scholars both in USA and UK who are concerned with the stages of evolution.

According to some historians, the origin of social anthropology is traced to David Hume and Immanuel Kant who were the first philosophers to define social anthropology. As already mentioned some consider, Herodotus as the father of Anthropology, who did raise some basic questions of social anthropology. But, it is believed that the systematic History of social anthropology rightly begins from Henry Maine and Lewis Henry Morgan. These two thinkers are considered as founding father of social anthropology. They also followed the works of travelers and missionaries.

The 19th century social anthropologists were greatly influenced by the work of Darwin and his associates. They established that the origin of man has passed through several stages from apes to Homo Sapiens. The Anthropologists tried to follow the logic of Darwinism and applied it to establish the origin of social institutions. This trend prevailed throughout the 19th century and the first quarter of the 20th century.

The definitions of social anthropology given by social Darwinists is a landmark in the development of this discipline. The foundation of present Anthropology goes back to Henry Maine's *Ancient law* (1861) and Lewis Henry Morgan's books, including *Ancient Society* (1877). Both of them were the profounder of evolutionary theory in Anthropology. This theory is considered to be the theoretical beginning in social anthropology. Maine worked in India. He proposed a distinction between status and contract societies. In status based or traditional societies, Maine argued, kinship was usually crucial in determining one's position in society; in a contract-based society, it would rather be the individual achievements of persons that provided them with their positions. On the other hand Morgan's contribution to early Anthropology formed the theoretical background. It resulted into the formation of evolutionary theory. It supports the notion of social evolution stating that human society has passed through the stages of savagery, barbarism and civilisation. Each stage has also been characterised by a certain economy. Savagery had an economy characterised by subsistence. During this stage man earned his livelihood through hunting and food gathering. Agriculture and animal husbandry were the source of living at the stage of barbarism. While those societies which reached the stage of civilisation, developed literacy, technology, industry and the state. This theory expounded by Morgan got support of many other scholars. Westermarck set out the theory of human marriage while Briffault propounded the theory of family. Evolutionary theory of religion also came out with the study of Tylor. Evolutionists like W.H.R. Rivers, Sir James Frazer, A.C. Haddon and Charles Seligman contributed to different fields. All these early social anthropologists defined social anthropology as a science of social evolution.

When evolutionary theory emerged in Anthropology many schools came up with an anti-evolutionary idea. They criticised evolutionists for depending on travel accounts, which they claimed to be unscientific. This school of thought is often referred to as structural–functional school of thought represented by the work of British Anthropologist Radcliffe-Brown. Another school that came up before this was the school of diffusionists. They were also critics of evolutionary school, who were not convinced by the concept of evolutionary progress of society and culture. According to their view, culture not only developed, but it also degenerated. Again, they followed that man was basically uninventive, and important inventions were made only once at a particular place from where it was diffused, migrated, borrowed and initiated, to the other parts of the world. There were three schools of diffusion – British school, German school and American school of diffusion. Smith, W.J. Perry, Rivers, Franz Boas, Clerk Wissler, Kroeber etc. were the scholars of this school.

Franz Boas and Bronislaw Malinowski are regarded as the first modern Anthropologists, who argued the necessity of doing fieldwork. Boas, a profound critic of classical evolutionists argued the necessity of doing field work. He emphasised in collecting empirical data and conducted fieldwork in USA to study American Indians in 1880. He founded Modern American Cultural Anthropology. He began to study the influence of culture on personality and vice versa and ultimately formed a school. The pioneers of this school are Ruth Benedict, Margaret Mead, Linton, Kardiner and Cora Du Bois. Boas contributed substantially to the field of Anthropology. The most important contribution seems to be the doctrine of 'cultural relativism'. It is the concept which argues that each group should be studied according to its own culture. In other words, culture is specific to a group. Today also, Boas' contribution of cultural relativism is considered to be an indispensable Anthropological tool of social and cultural anthropology. Boas defined anthropology as a social science of culture study. This is one of the aspects of modern Anthropology.

Malinowski, founder of functional school of thought is known for his work on the Trobrianders living in the island of New Guinea. He conducted fieldwork among these tribals between 1915 and 1918. According to Malinowski, social anthropology is concerned with the interrelationship of various parts of tribal society. In other words, tribal economy, politics, kinship etc. are all interrelated. According to him, social anthropology is interested in studying functional relations among the member of tribal society. Malinowski contributed a lot to the fieldwork tradition in anthropology. His ethnographic account based on his fieldwork '*Argonauts of Western Pacific*' is a landmark publication in Anthropology. The concept of participant observation was developed by him. He emphasised the importance of studying the interrelationships of various aspects of society, and therefore held the view that intensive field study was absolutely necessary.

Radcliffe-Brown, contemporary of Malinowski, developed the social structure concept to explain forms. It is another important development in social anthropology. According to him, social structure deals with the study of status and role of a person within an institution. In other words, it deals with network of social relation within an institutional framework. Radcliffe-Brown, criticising classical evolutionists said that the study of change is also essential. But, unlike classical evolutionist study, these must be based on reliable document. He said that classical evolutionism was based on conjectural history. It is nothing but a conjectural speculation of the life of the people. He called it pseudo historical. So, he argued that classical evolutionism has no place in scientific investigation.

Anthropologists study pre-literate society. Therefore, whatever knowledge, they have of their tradition; it exists on the oral level. The oral history may mix up with myth and other stories. Therefore, it may not be totally relied upon as an authentic source. The early twentieth century scholars, those who are critical of evolutionary theory thought rather than studying how society has evolved, all must study how society lives and functions. It is a shift of paradigm. The approach which was born out of it is popularly known as structural–functional approach. The founder of this theoretical trend argued that instead of understanding a diachronic study of society social anthropologists should carry out synchronic study – the study of present society. Radcliffe-Brown called anthropology as the study of here and now. He also stressed upon doing first hand fieldwork. Thus, social anthropologists started studying present social structure focusing on interrelationship of social institutions and their functions.

But this trend also faced certain criticisms like – (1) it does not account for social change. It is concerned with order. (2) Whatever it has considered change, the change is adaptive. But every society goes through a process of change. Sometimes change comes following a revolutionary path. So, structural functional study was unable to cover this area and it opened the door for criticism. Therefore, by 1940s anthropologists revived the need to study evolution. The approach of neo-evolutionism was introduced in the field of archeology. V. Gordon Childe, Leslie White and Julian Steward represent this school of thought. They defined social evolution with new perspective. Various new approaches to the study of evolution called attention to the question, how to combine particulars with general. The issue became sharpened by the writings of Marvin Harris who emphasised upon Radcliffe-Brown's earlier distinction between nomothetic and ideographic approach to the study of culture.

In between, Robert Redfield introduced the study of civilisation to social anthropology. Redfield developed the concepts of folk–urban continuum and great and little traditions which were very useful concepts for studying a civilisation and its various dimensions such as tribal, folk, semi-urban and urban. Thus, village, town and city studies were

introduced. The other scholars who contributed to this field are – Morris E. Opler, Milton Singer, Meckim Marriot, Mandel Baum etc.

Like any other discipline Anthropology has also been experiencing many new trends. In the theoretical dimensions many new theories like symbolism, new ethnography etc. have come up with new promises. This field has been continuously expanding with many other new theories and ideas. Along with this applied aspects, social anthropology has also been expanding. Developmental studies in social anthropology are occupying a major area. New field methods and techniques are also coming up enriching the research pattern. Ideas like postmodernism are creating new platform for the social anthropologists to explore. Several Anthropological sub-fields are coming up, stressing separate and specific cultural aspects and all using the prefix 'Ethno' to indicate their alliance with culture, such as ethno-science, ethno musicology, ethno-psychology, ethno-folklore and so forth. Thus, social anthropology has constantly been developing as a branch of Anthropology.

1.2.4 Methods of Social Anthropology

Social anthropology may be described as a scientific study of man, culture and society. The objective is to know the truth about the affairs of society. It seeks to develop skills so that human beings can live a better life. For this employment of scientific method is essential. If there is a science, there is certainly a method. Theory, method and data go together. Social anthropology has a well developed methodology for learning about society.

What is unique to social anthropology 'in the realm of Social Sciences' is its fieldwork methodology which is the guiding force of this discipline. Method is logic. What anthropologists do when they face a problem – they try to solve it logically. In short, they make a logical understanding for the problem. They argue how the problem can be approached logically so that the desired objective is fulfilled. It is this logic which leads to attainment of the objectives of logic to put forward the research problem. In short, method is the logic of inquiry; it is the role of accomplishing an end.

In social anthropological research fieldwork and empirical tradition have been constant characteristics of social anthropology. It started with the travel accounts written by the travelers who had been traveling to distant corners of the globe for about four hundred years, since 'the age of Columbus'. As already discussed, these travel accounts provided the basic data for the early social anthropologists. The facts gathered by these travelers, missionaries, and government officials were valuable to make the other Europeans aware about the varied human life on earth. Many European thinkers became interested about the non-European cultures and gradually 'study of man' was initiated basing on the accounts of travelers, missionaries and government officials.

The Anthropologists of nineteenth century were totally involved in exploring the variety of human culture but they were apart from the rigorous life of actual field. Sitting in their home they simply looked into the accounts served by other people. The value of fieldwork was realised at the beginning of twentieth century when the outlook of social anthropology changed. It was understood that experiencing the real life situation was very important for the social anthropologists, to get accurate and relevant data. So many anthropologists of this time engaged themselves with the groups of aborigines. E.B. Tylor was the first scholar who emphasised the need of direct data-collection in Anthropology, but Boas was the first to begin with this practice. The earliest attempt of professional data gathering, as mentioned previously,

was made in America by Franz Boas. He conducted Jessup North Pacific Expedition in 1897. The second attempt at fieldwork was made in England under joint leadership of Haddon, Rivers and Seligman in 1898. It is known as Cambridge Expedition to Torres Straits.

The most outstanding fieldwork tradition in Anthropology was developed by Malinowski. He believed that the various aspects in the life of people were interrelated. Malinowski also stressed on fieldwork as primary way of anthropological data gathering. According to Malinowski (1922 : 6), a cultural anthropologist must "possess real scientific aims and know the values and criteria of modern ethnography … he has to apply a number of special methods of collecting, manipulating and fixing his evidence". Malinowski established participation as an important technique of fieldwork. Next to Malinowski, we can put the name of A.R. Radcliffe–Brown who did extensive fieldwork in Andaman Islands.

The early fieldworkers tried to understand how all the parts of a society fit together to make a working whole. They emphasised on detailing. They tried to gather each and every information available on the field. They developed the habit of filling their notebooks with details of what they saw and heard, and those unprecedented ethnographic activities resulted into ethnographic monographs. As a matter of fact, a social anthropologist has to live and work in two worlds. Field becomes the laboratory where one collects data and leads a very different life living with the aborigines far away from his/her own world. Once he/she comes back from the field one sits with the gathered data and starts analysing those to come up with a conclusion.

Subjectivity became a big issue in this ethnographic description. Since social anthropology is an empirical discipline, it languishes for the absence of a deep respect for facts and for loose attention to their observation and description. A self-indulgent attitude may produce a disastrous effect. But, beyond all these, fieldwork became an essential part of social anthropology and the tradition developed with certain new methods and techniques making itself relevant to the present day context. Qualitative research that involves huge descriptive accounts has become very useful and important in today's world. Not only Anthropology but also other disciplines like Sociology and Management studies have also indulged into this type of research. But fieldwork remains unique to social anthropology.

Fieldwork is a part of training in social-cultural anthropology. Every anthropologist should undergo this training in course of his/her preliminary study. It enables a student to perceive an alien culture with objectivity. Learning about two different societies (including his own) gives a student a comparative view i.e. he acquires competency to estimate the similarity or dissimilarity between any two societies or cultures. Comparative method holds a very important place in fieldwork tradition in Anthropology. During nineteenth century extensive comparisons were attempted by social anthropologists. This pertains to the whole society and also to particular institutions and practices such as kinship system, marriage practices, magical practices, and religious beliefs and so on.

There is a clear mark of history as a method in Anthropological monograph. There are two classical streams in social anthropology to the employment of history as a method of study. One use of history is non-chronological. The evolutionary Anthropologists used this kind of history as a method to study society. The second stream is Marxian.

Another important method in Anthropology is the functional method. Functionalism,

as a method of study in social anthropology, came up as a revolt against historical method. Interestingly, the evolutionary historicism came into disrepute owing to the emergence of empiricism. Empiricism is experience. When social anthropologists took to holistic studies through empiricism, functionalism came to be known as a new idiom of methodology. Functionalism advocated the holistic study of society through fieldwork.

New methods have been emerging in social anthropology with new demands in response to the new challenges. Techniques related to these methods are also changing. New techniques have also been designed to suit the methodological demands. The traditional techniques are – observation, schedules, questionnaire, interview, case study, survey, genealogy etc. With the new methods like ethnography, new techniques have been coming out. Emergence of new branches like developmental anthropology, visual anthropology etc. is also demanding new methodological framework. Like any other discipline Anthropology is also experiencing new dimensions with the passage of time. Methodological dimension is also not exclusive of such changes.

1.3 NATURE AND SCOPE OF SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Generally speaking, social anthropology aims to study human society as a whole. It is a holistic study necessarily and covers all parts related to human society. Culture comes naturally under this, as it is an integral part of human society. So, the basic aim of social anthropology is to study human being as a social animal. Thus, to fulfill its aim it explores, in a broad area, covering almost every aspects of human social life.

The aim of modern social anthropology is just not to study human society but also to understand the complex issues of modern human life. As primitive people have been the focus of anthropological study, the problems faced by these people in the process of development in modern days become very important for the anthropologists to study. Anthropologists not only deal with the study of these problems but also try to find out a solution for this. Developmental anthropology and Action anthropology etc. are the specialised fields within social anthropology which deal with such problems. Therefore, we can say that the scope and aim of social anthropology go together; one influences the other. As much as the scope increases a new aim comes out of it.

1.3.1 Scope of Social Anthropology

According to Evans–Pritchard (1966), social anthropology includes the study of all human cultures and society. In basic, it tries to find out the structure of human society. Social anthropology considers every human society as an organised whole. Customs, beliefs whole pattern of working, living, marrying, worshipping, political organisation – all these differ from society to society. As the structure and the idea working behind it are different, societies also vary a lot. Social anthropology first tries to find out these differences and then tries to establish the similarities as well. As we can see different cultures and societies, we also see similarity among these different cultures and societies. So, anthropologists study these differences as well as the similarities. Basically, the study revolves around the social structure. We can take up the example of studying religion. People in different parts of the world practice different religions. Every religion has different rituals to perform and people perform these rituals according to their own religious roles. The common thing among these different religions is the

belief in super-natural. So, both the differences and similarities become the study matter of social anthropology.

Evans-Pritchard, by comparing social anthropology with Sociology, states that Social anthropology has primitive society as its subject matter. In other words, it is concerned with the study of the primitives, indigenous people, hills and forest people, scheduled tribes and other such groups of people. Fieldwork is another integral part of social anthropology. Data in social anthropology are collected from the field. Thus, social anthropology can be defined in respect of two broad field of study – (1) Primitive Society (2) Fieldwork.

John Beattie (1964) advocated that social anthropologists should study other cultures. This makes Anthropology a comparative discipline of the study of social institutions. Thomas Hylland Eriksen (1995) supports the study of small places in social anthropology. Eriksen says that social anthropology does not remain restricted to primitive people; it studies any social system and the qualification of such a social system is that it is of a small scale, non-industrial kind of society. According to Eriksen, social anthropology studies:

1)   Small scale society

2)   Non-industrial society

3)   Small and larger issues of the society.

Different theoretical frameworks came out as social anthropology started exploring its matter of study– the primitive society. Morgan postulated Evolutionary theory and propounded the study of evolution in human society. According to him human society has come across three basic stages – savagery, barbarism and civilisation. With such evolutionary approach social anthropologists started examining human society in the light of evolution. The theoretical framework of structural – functionalism became a popular approach in Britain. The British anthropologists using the term Social anthropology have emphasised on the concept of society, which is aggregate of individuals who live in face to face association and share same common sentiments. Different social interrelationships and interactions are their object of study. Functionalism propounded the functional study of social institutions. On the other hand, American anthropologists preferring the term Cultural anthropology have concentrated on the concept of culture which is the sum total of human behaviour, verbal or non-verbal, and their products- material or non-material. Cultural anthropologists try to analyse each and every intervention and interrelationship by judging the value behind it.

The term civilisation was known to Anthropologists since the postulation of evolutionary theory, but it was the pioneering work of Robert Redfield, who brought a movement in the history of development of social anthropology by introducing the study of civilisation. He made study of folk villages and urban centers and attempted to understand the patterns and processes of interception between them. Thus, he developed the concept of folk society, urban society and folk–urban continuum. Since then the study of village as a unit of rural civilisation and town as a center for urban civilisation came into existence. Thus, Anthropology is not the study of primitive people only. The subject matter of social anthropology covers a vast area. It studies tribal society as well as urban society. It studies change as well. No culture and society regardless of circumstances, is beyond change. Isolated / primitive societies also change over time. Sometimes with due pressure of circumstances also society

does not change. It follows strictly a traditional path, constantly trying to keep alive the tradition. Social anthropology studies why or why not society/ culture changes. But, change is must, whether it is a remote and isolated village or industrialised city, everywhere people experience a variety of changes in their pattern of living, which is manifested with the passage of time.

The life of man has several dimensions and the attempts to study each one in detail has resulted in the origin and growth of several sub-branches from the elementary branch of Social anthropology such as Economic anthropology, Political anthropology, Psychological anthropology, Anthropology of Religion and so on and so forth. Many new sub-branches are also coming up like – Communication and Visual anthropology, with the new demands of society. Social anthropology has to accommodate all the new changes in human society to maintain the relevance of its study. Thus, new areas would expand its field.

1.3.2 Future Perspective

Anthropology has been playing a very important role in each and every sphere of human society. During colonial times, it was used as an administrative tool. Social anthropology came out of that colonial impression and now had created a new disciplinary path. As an academic discipline it has a firm theoretical base and unique practical dimension. In the near future also it is truly capable of accommodating disciplinary changes with new theoretical frameworks. Anthropology covers not only contemporary patterns of human life but also carefully records the changes in human society and life. It covers historic and prehistoric account of human life as well. So, it becomes very relevant for each and every stage of human civilisation.

Claude Levi-Strauss envisages the future of social anthropology as a study complete by itself in terms of communications between persons and groups. The study of communication, of words and symbols conveying meanings between persons in a society would constitute the study of linguistics, knowledge, art etc. The study of communication of spouses (man in matrilocal society and woman in patrilocal society) between various groups would constitute the study of marriage, kin groups and kinship usages. And communication of goods and services between persons and as also groups would constitute the scope of study of economic organisation and material culture. Thus, studies of human society may be studied not in terms of culture but in terms of structures which embody culture. Many such innovative ideas are coming up in the field of social anthropology and its scope is increasing in terms of both theory and practice.

1.3.3 Social Anthropology in India

In the scenario of World Anthropology, Indian anthropology appears as very young. Andre Beteille (1996) used the term 'Indian Anthropology' to mean the study of society and culture in India by anthropologists, irrespective of their nationality. Indian society and culture are being studied by various Anthropologists from inside and outside of the country. However, Anthropology owes its origin to the latter half of the nineteenth century with the ethnographic compilation of traditions and beliefs of different tribes and castes in various provinces of India. It was only during the British colonial rule that Anthropological data was gathered. With no academic interest government officials and missionaries first collected some anthropological data in the eighteenth century. But, the motive behind this was not to study the Indian societies and cultures but to help the British administration for smooth governance. Missionaries had a religious motive. However, both the administrators and missionaries were

baffled when they came across various types of people having entirely different cultures. They tried to communicate their strange experience through writing, by describing the people and their facts. At the end of nineteenth century, the administrators and missionaries in India wrote a lot about the Indian people and their life. Trained British officials namely Risley, Dalton, Thurston, O'Malley, Russell, Crook, Mills etc. and many others who were posted in India, wrote compendia on tribes and castes of India. During this time some British anthropologists like Rivers, Seligman, Radcliffe–Brown, Hutton came to India and conducted Anthropological fieldwork. Throughout the whole century after this, Anthropologists in India proceeded successfully. Indian anthropologists borrowed the ideas, frameworks and procedures of work from western anthropologists and practiced these studying their own culture and society instead of other cultures.

Different scholars like S.C. Roy, D.N. Majumdar, G.S. Ghurye, S.C. Dube, N.K. Bose, L.P. Vidyarthi and S. Sinha had tried to find out the genesis and development of Social Anthropology in India. S.C. Roy's paper *Anthropological Researches in India* (1921) reflects upon the works on tribes and castes published before 1921. The anthropological accounts consisted of the writings of British administrators and missionaries as before 1921 anthropological work in India was mainly done by these people. After this, D.N. Majumdar tried to trace the development of Anthropology in India. This attempt was made after twenty five years of S.C. Roy's work. D.N. Majumdar tried to relate the developing discipline of Anthropology in India with the theory of culture that originated in Britain and America. American influence was first recognised besides the works of British administrators and missionaries.

G.S. Ghurye, in his article *The teaching of Sociology, Social Psychology and Social Anthropology* (1956), wrote, 'Social Anthropology in India has not kept pace with the developments in England, in Europe or in America. Although Social Anthropologists in India are, to some extent, familiar with the work of important British Anthropologists or some continental scholars, their knowledge of American Social Anthropology is not inadequate'. S.C. Dube in (1952) discussed the issue in the light of research oriented issues. He stated that Indian Anthropology needed more attention from the social workers, administrators or political leaders, so that the research oriented issues can be dealt with properly. N.K. Bose in 1963 discussed the progress of Anthropology in India under headings - Prehistoric Anthropology, Physical Anthropology and Cultural Anthropology. Recent trends like village studies, caste studies, study of leaderships and power structure, kinship and social organisation of tribal village and Applied Anthropology came to the Indian scenario in 1970s and L.P. Vidyarthi discussed these issues, tracing the growth of Anthropology in India. He felt the need of an integrated effect from various disciplines for a proper understanding of man and society. His main stress was laid on 'Indianess'. According to him ideas of Indian thinkers as reflected in ancient scriptures were full of social facts and so those could be explored in the understanding of cultural process and civilisation history of India. Surajit Sinha (1968) supporting the view of L. P. Vidyarthi stated that the Indian Anthropologists readily responded to the latest developments of the west but they had laid logical priority to the Indian situation.

In India, Anthropology started with the work of missionaries, traders and administrators where the prime focus was the different cultural backgrounds of Indian people. The rich tribal culture attracted the study of social anthropology. Tribal culture became a dominant field for Social anthropological research. This continued along with the changing trend and accommodated the study of village system, and Indian civilisation. Other social institutions like – religion, kinship, marriage etc. also came to the field

of research. The variety of customs and diversity of Indian culture created a unique area of research among the social anthropologists of India. Different ideas like dominant caste, sacred complex, tribe-caste continuum, little and great tradition, sankritisation etc. came up, giving a new direction to Indian Anthropology. Thus, a body of strong Indian anthropological thought was created. Development of Indian anthropology is continuing with additions of new ideas. Emerging areas like ecology, developmental study etc., are also coming up. Anthropologists in India take keen interest in tribal studies. The new challenges in the era of globalisation are also coming up and Indian social anthropologists are focusing on that.

1.3.4 Present Scenario

After independence India faced new challenges of social reform, as a new government took charge. The whole notion of Indian culture had to be rebuilt, as diverse culture areas had come under one roof. Various tribal societies and cultures were unable to cope up with this changing situation. Apart from administrative policies, Indian social anthropologists took initiatives to overcome such crisis and showed interest in the study of diverse cultures in India under the common roof of Indian civilisation. Government policies were influenced with these social anthropological works as these works dealt with the sensitive issues like tribal development. This trend continues in the field of Indian anthropology. Today, in the era of globalisation, social anthropologists in India deal with the new challenges in front of the tribal communities. Identity and gender issues are popular among them, along with development studies. Study of folk culture occupies a major area. With development studies, issues like tribal displacement and rehabilitation have also been a prime focus for social anthropologists. Tribal art, study of indigenous knowledge system etc. are gaining popularity with the new global issues like – global warming.

1.4 SUMMARY

In this unit the focus was on how social anthropology has developed as a discipline covering the different aspects of human life. Social anthropology thus, developed through various time periods with various goals and perspectives and it has covered almost all the aspects of human life.

You learnt about different theoretical frameworks of social anthropology. Along with these theoretical frameworks, how social anthropology deals with the various issues of human life was also discussed. Different approaches have also been discussed considering the geographical variations.

Present and future scenario of social anthropology have also been discussed. You would be able to conceptualise about the Indian and world scenario of social anthropology after going through this unit.

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Suggested Reading

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Sample Questions

1) Describe the history and development of social anthropology.

2) How social anthropology has developed in India?

3) Briefly describe the aim and scope of social anthropology.

4) Describe history as a method in social anthropology.

UNIT 2 PHILOSOPHICAL AND HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS OF SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Contents

Learning Objectives

After reading this unit, the students would be able to comprehend the:

➢ emergence of the historical and philosophical development of the subject of social anthropology;

➢ early and classical evolutionists views on the study of human evolution; and

➢ primitive as a concept.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this unit we shall introduce the students to the philosophical roots of the subject of anthropology, especially social anthropology, and show how every form of knowledge can be contextualised into a historical condition. Human thinking does not grow in a vacuum but is triggered by the intellectual climate, the cultural heritage and historical circumstances that make possible a way of thinking as well as its condition's acceptable. It is seen that some ideas may come that are premature for their times and therefore face rejection or even persecution, like the classic case of Galileo.

2.2 THE BEGINNINGS OF THE POSSIBILITY OF A SCIENTIFIC STUDY OF SOCIETY

Society, for a long period of time, was not considered to be an object of study, simply because it was taken for granted that society and human beings in it were God's or a Divine creation and the only explanations of the origin of the world and the people and other existing animate and inanimate things was to be found in religion and mythology. It was indeed a great transformation in intellectual thinking when some 16th and 17th century European scholars began to think about society as a human and not a divine creation. By this century in the West, the intellectual climate

was moving towards a break away from the Church and its controlling ritualism towards a greater faith in the human capacity for rational thinking. The human mind was seen as a superior endowment that privileged human beings above all others and could dominate over nature and also over women who in this frame of reference were equated with nature. Society was seen as a creation not of nature or of God but of humans as creatures of reason and society was now opposed to a state of nature and the foundation was laid for a nature, culture opposition that had far reaching ramifications for later theory.

It was with the philosophical thinking of scholars such as David Hume, John Locke, Thomas Hobbes and Jean Jacques Rousseau that the scholarly thinking began to debate upon the human origins of the kind of society in which the then Europeans lived. Society became a self imposed discipline to which human beings subjected themselves in order to escape a state of anarchy. Some like Rousseau romanticised on a blissful state of nature from which humans had entered into a state of slavery to customs, while others like Hobbes viewed a state of nature as savage and the state of society as harmonious and desirable. It was at this point that individuals were seen as opposed to society or the collectivity and a tension between the two became a point of concern of western views about society.

By the seventeenth century onwards the Europeans had been thrown into close contact with the non-European world through colonisation, conquest and trade, at the same time there were genuine thinking about a unified vision of humanity that encompassed even those most remote from the western civilisation. Scholars were now faced not only with the task of explaining human social origins but also social diversity.

2.2.1 Montesquieu and Social Diversity

The French philosopher Montesquieu has often been regarded as the first to have a systematic theory about society as described in his work *The Spirit of the Laws*. In true spirit of having a science of society, he worked on the basic premise that the seemingly endless diversity is reducible to coherence by looking for some underlying principle of causation. In other words, if we can find out what causes diversity, we have a classification and explanation of varieties of social formations. A second premise was again based upon that of finding a scientific explanation, namely of creating a typology of societies. Thus two fundamental processes of a scientific explanation, namely, to establish causal relationships and to arrange diversity into a typology in order to gain insight, were applied by Montesquieu to the study of society. Firstly he divided societies into three types of governments; republic, monarchy and despotism. Secondly he tried to establish some causative factors for the development of each of these types. A republic was where the government was vested in either a part of a society (aristocracy) or in all the people (democracy); while in both monarchy and despotism it was vested in an individual the difference being that the monarchy is run on principles and law (Montesquieu had the British monarchy as an example in front of him) and despotism follows no such rules. To Montesquieu, each form of government was not just a political principle but was a particular kind of society which was also founded upon a particular type of basic sentiment. We can compare the concept of sentiment with what much later Ruth Benedict had called ethos, in describing different types of cultures (Benedict, 1934). Thus the predominant kind of sentiment in case of a republic was virtue in the sense of what today we would call ethics, adherence to laws and a sense of collective order, in case of monarchy, it was honour again this was in reference to rank and

status and was primarily of the person in power, and that of despotism was that of primal emotion of fear, of the people for the person in power. Thus the sentiments are not seen as evenly distributed but refer to the main guiding principle of that particular type of society.

The real sociological dimension of Montesquieu's analysis lies in his attempts to impute causes to the types of societies which unlike Comte, he did not put in any evolutionary framework. To him the causative factors were both geographical, like climate and nature of the soil and social in terms of trade, its historical transformations and currency. While his analysis contains some traces of economic determinism in his emphasis on the economic factors over others, he did not impute any progressive scale to the societies. In his opinion, despotism, the most evil of the three could well be the fate of most societies as monarchies had a tendency to transform into despotism, especially when the size became too large. At the same time he referred to the British parliament as a combination of democracy and aristocracy represented by the House of Commons and the House of Lords. The moderate nature of government, that is one that was not oppressive like despotism was possible through a balance of power and like most people of his time he had no concept of equality, only a benign balance of power or rule by principles by those in power. To some extent, however, he does give primacy to sentiments over physical conditions and makes some judgment about the moral and ethical qualities of different principles of government. Thus we find in Montessquieu a sociological analysis that makes use of causative factors underlying various types of societies and an attempt to understand social formation, both in terms of creating a typology of societies independent of any particular spatial or temporal distribution.

Social philosophers were also beginning to think in terms of social transformation as the French Revolution brought about the first major social transformation of the mid eighteenth century, setting the stage for rethinking on society, not as static but as an entity that was likely to have changed over time. It was in this historical setting that August Comte gave his theory of social evolution.

2.2.2 Comte and a Positivist View of Society

The French Revolution and the beginnings of industrialisation in Europe gave a different perspective to the social philosophy of Auguste Comte who concentrated upon transformation of society from one type to another rather than upon the co-existence of a diversity of social types, like Montesquieu. As Comte saw it, the society based on military power and religion was being replaced by one based on science and industry. Thus instead of looking at a horisontal diversity, he looked upon a vertical transformation. Hence, to him science or rational study of society would be one in which one would be able to explain how society is transforming. Thus to an intellectual analysis of society, he gave the nomenclature, sociology and to the method of analysis, the term positivism.

Comte distinguished between an analytic and a synthetic analysis; an analytic method can be applied only in material sciences where any two things can be linked without consideration to context, but in social analysis context is essential or in other words, he applied the organic analogy where no part has existence outside of the whole. Therefore, social phenomenon can only be understood in context of the associated aspects including history. Thus while material phenomenon can be understood as elements, society only exists as an entity. This was the beginning of an organic analogy and the holistic method later taken up by the structural functionalists. But

Comte's more immediate application was that of the postulation of a stage by stage theory of progress that was the basis of classical evolutionary theories.

To Comte all of human society is only one entity, and differences are only at various levels of progress exhibited by them. The level at which European society was existing (or rather making a transition) was preceded by earlier stages. Comte's stage by stage theory of progress was of the Theological, Metaphysical and the Age of Reason. The positivist method of observation, experimentation and analysis that signified the western scientific approach was possible only in the last stage of human progress. To Comte nothing was achievable by human agency and that historical events took their own course, thus a revolution was not a human achievement but part of an inevitable course of events, subject to natural laws. In this way sociology for him was the laws of historical development.

When humans had imperfect understanding of their environment, they worshipped anthropomorphic beings, alter the objects of worship became more abstract or metaphysical like in higher religions, but finally humans attained a reasoned understanding of their environment in the form of science and society was moving towards industrialisation and emphasis upon economy and trade rather than war. However the most industrialised societies of the world have always shown themselves to be more prone to warfare and science never did replace religion as a central concern of human beings. But to Comte we do owe a systematic study of society to be called as sociology although in terms of the comparative method, it was Montesquieu, who led the way.

To mention Comte one must not forget to mention his mentor and teacher Saint-Simon, who according to Durkheim was the real father of positivism. Saint-Simon believed that society or institutions were only epiphenomenon of ideas and that behind every coherent society there was a body of coherent ideas. As an idealist he supported the French Revolution and also fought in the American war of independence. To him the French revolution was the result of a break down in the coherence of theological ideas and the monarchy; and that monarchy needed to be replaced by industry by which he meant any kind of honest work. In his view of social transformation, organic or stable periods were marked by a breakdown of existing social relationships and the forging of new ones.

However not all thinkers were of the opinion that western societies were superior in all respects; Hume for example was convinced that polytheism gave rise to a sense of greater tolerance and gave more freedom to human thought than monotheism that was too restrictive, Rousseau also believed the civilisations to be too controlling of human freedom of both thought and action. But while Comte talked of progress, he did not mention evolution as a concept that was first formulated by Herbert Spencer, although later established by Charles Darwin.

2.3   THE STUDY OF HUMAN EVOLUTION

The concept of evolution was formally established by Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) the author of the book *Progress: Its' Laws and Causes* published in 1857. Spencer believed that evolution was a feature of all phenomena; organic, inorganic or super organic. He, like other evolutionists to follow, believed that evolution goes through uniform stages always towards progress that he defined in terms of greater differentiation as well as integration, in other words greater complexity. Spencer believed that those of superior ability have greater advantage in survival, an idea expressed in the cliché "survival of the fittest", variously misused over the period

following him. He foreshadowed the concept of structure and function looking upon societies as some kind of self regulating systems, where human agency had limited role to play while the constituent parts were interdependent. In this sense of viewing society as having its own inner logic, he was against too much of external interference in regulating social affairs. He was thus against any kind of state welfare programs, looking upon the poor and marginal as weeds that would eliminate themselves.

Spencer believed that as society evolved human beings would learn to live together by consensus rather than by coercion, in other words a civic society based on mutual consideration would evolve. In this sense also he contributed to the western bias of seeing so called primitive societies as based upon a mechanical solidarity and advanced forms of society as based upon organic solidarity. War and conquest were also seen by him to be a part of progress or to establish the domination of the superior to bring about more complex forms.

The term evolution was first used in seventeenth century Europe to designate a process of unfolding in a sense that the outcome is already contained within the entity, in other words there is a sense of inevitability. Comte also used it to designate progress and inevitability of transformation. But a science of society based on evolutionary principles can definitely be attributed to Spencer alone.

Darwin's theory of evolution was more correctly to be understood as descent with modification, an empirical work based on factual data and lacking sweeping generalisation of Spencer.

A major contributor to the idea of evolution was Herder who further refined the concept of progress into development, and gave a definite shape to each level of development as a stage. Evolutionism can be understood as a nomothetic or generalised mode of explanation that can also be called a grand or meta theory. It makes use of the comparative method borrowed from biology and philology. Apart from Spencer, some of the early social evolutionists whose works influenced anthropological theory immensely were McLennan (1827-81), Bachofen (1815-87) and Maine (1822-88)

2.3.1 The Early Evolutionists

None of these authors were anthropologists as they predate the establishment of anthropology as a separate discipline. All three were lawyers whose subject matter of dealing with human society gave them an incentive to study the development of society and to make generalisations basing themselves on earlier scholarly inputs.

J.J. Bachofen was greatly influenced by the works of Carl von Savigny interested in symbolism of grave paintings where he identified the recurrent themes such as the black and white eggs that he interprets as feminine and interprets the feminine as the passive recipient of discourse between men, who are shown as standing and talking presumably about the egg. However, Bachofen's major contribution lies in advocating for mother right as a predecessor of father right, or patriarchy. In other words he associates the rule of women as more primitive state than the rule of men, which appears to him as definitely more like civilisation. According to Bachofen social relationships arise in response to the need or establishment of social order contained in the basic needs of child rearing, sexual access and social authority; thus the first stage is anarchy or no order, then comes one based on rule by women that is finally replaced by the rule by men. He took the example of three fictitious societies to illustrate the prevalence of mother right in his work *Das Muttterrecht,* 1861, as he neither had access to any first hand data nor were there any ethnographic examples of matriarchal societies.

His view of the early stages of human society was that they were close to nature and materialistic. In some ways his views reflect the general conceptualisation of the primitive societies as based on instinct rather than reason, as lacking higher spirituality and crude in their mental makeup; in this sense the transition from mother right to patriarchy is also synonymous with ethical and moral upliftment.

The reasons for transformation of societies reflect both a Hegelian dialectics and Montequieu's contextualisation, thus each system produces contradictions leading to reactions. The fundamental change is in the way people think about good and bad or the right and the wrong; once these change all aspects of society change. He believed in the power of ideas to change society. To a very large extent he was Eurocentric in that in his opinion the conquest of the East by the West was a major step towards higher civilisation and embodied the victory of non-material over material, reason over feeling and maleness over femaleness. Thus he follows the western philosophy of equating the feminine with passivity, instinct, nature and the base qualities of life while masculinity is equated with, reason, culture and the higher qualities of life. He gave his idea about masculine and feminine in the broad universal categorisation of everything in the universe in his matriarchal mosaic and patriarchal mosaic. To him these were two different cultural types albeit hierarchical.

Henry Maine too was a lawyer whose major work *Ancient Law* was published in 1861. He derived his intellectual inspiration from Montesquieu, Jeremy Bentham and John Austin. He linked the laws of people with their social heritage and rejected the idea of laws of society being homologous to laws of nature or in other words the possibility of having universal laws. According to Maine there are three fundamental aspects of any law, its origin in a command, an obligation imposed by the command and a sanction to enforce the obligation. These aspects are derived from the works of John Austin and Jeremy Bentham. However he did not accept Jeremy Bentham's main thesis of utility that each individual should get from society what they contribute to it. The Benthamite principle takes as the main fundamental unit of law, the individual whereas most non-western systems see the individual as embedded in social relationships. There can also be a debate as to the assessment of utility, how does one define or find any universal standard for it. However, Maine's work was based on the detailed study of ancient legal systems, notably that of ancient Rome, Islamic law and the Brahmanical laws as encoded by Manu. In this way Maine focused upon higher civilisations and came up with the proposition that patriarchy was the first form of the family. In this way he opposes both Bachofen and McLennan, who were for the model of evolution of human societies from matriarchy/matriliny to patriarchy/patriliny.

His main contribution lies in putting forward the thesis that societies evolve from status to contract, in other words from a stage where social personhood is defined by a person's social relationships or ascriptive status to one where social personhood is determined by rational legal characters.

Reflection

Maine traces the origin of family to the 'Patrias Potestas' of the ancient Romans, tracing the evolutionary stages from the male headed household with wives, children including adopted ones and slaves to the power of the king and oligarchies, then nobility and then industrial societies where instead of kinship, contractual relationships become important.

Maine's sequence is not speculative but based on data from historical societies. Since he was not aware of the actual depth of human civilisation his data began from the early stages of European society only. However he had served as an administrator

in India and was for sometime the vice-chancellor of Calcutta University. It was because of his intervention that the Indian legal system was debated upon taking cognisance of the ancient Hindu codes and other civil codes existing in India, rather than replacing it totally by the British system as was done by the Permanent Settlement of Bengal of 1793. Maine rightly believed that a legal system cannot be transplanted onto an alien society as each legal system reflects a specific kind of society. Legislation and jurisprudence was not the only expression of a legality as supposed by Bentham and others but only the final stage of a historical development of law beginning from the divine laws of ancient times to its codification as at the time of Hammurabi and then to modern law expressed by the British legal system based on contract.

McLennan too was a lawyer who reflected upon the evolution of human marriage and society. His book *Primitive Marriage* written in 1865 had great influence and made the notion of matriarchy as the early stage of human evolution popular as directly opposed to Maine's theory of Patriarchy. McLennan followed a speculative theory where he presumed a so called primitive stage where there was no regulation sexual activity; female infanticide was rampant that led to a situation of scarcity of women that would cause men to enter into conflict over scarce women. To mitigate the situation of conflict each group would exchange its women with other groups in a peaceful negotiation leading to the practice of exogamy that would also establish the notion of clans as a group that would not marry its own women. However even exogamy would not solve the problem of shortage of women giving rise to the practice of polyandry. Eventually with fraternal polyandry some notion of fatherhood would come up. In the initial stages however only the biological fact of motherhood would serve to distinguish a set of children as siblings and descended from a common mother, therefore the notion of matriliny would be an obvious precursor of patriliny. The establishment of fatherhood as a part of kinship relationships could only come much later when fraternal polyandry would give way to levirate.

While Maine had given the sequence of social evolution as family-gen-tribe-state; McLennan gave the opposite sequence of tribe-gen-family. Thus the tribe was a stage of undifferentiated promiscuity where only motherhood was recognised, followed by gens that recognise siblings and finally family that recognises the father and mother as the parents of a set of siblings. Morgan agreed with McLennan giving the additional evidence in the form of kinship terminology. He said that kinship terminologies were survivals of earlier forms of marriage, thus the generational or Hawaiian kinship that has only generation and sex specific kin terms actually represents a stage of promiscuity where one could only recognise generations and sex and no other kin relationship.

However the counter argument came from Charles Darwin himself, who criticised the concept of primitive promiscuity as proposed by McLennan saying that sexual jealously was an innate emotion and humans must have had ordered mating patterns from an early stage. Moreover there was no evidence of promiscuity from any known human society, past or present. Later Westermarck in his monumental work on the *History of Human Marriage* once and for all laid to rest the debate about promiscuity as well as matriarchy. In fact it was Westermarck's criticism that discredited Morgan and for a long time he was not taken seriously.

However, Morgan along with Edward B Tylor can be called as the founders of the discipline of anthropology as the subject is known today.

2.3.2 Classical Evolutionism

Charles Darwin's work had established the Monogenistic School that believed that all humans have the same origin and thus there is no racial difference in human

development. Given that all humans have the same potential the problem in front of the nineteenth century European scholars was to explain the varieties of cultures found all over the world and the fact that the Europeans were also experiencing transformations that made it clear that their society had also evolved from an earlier stage where things were not the same as they were then. Anthropology as a discipline was established to study two primary issues facing the civilised men of nineteenth century Europe, the facts of human evolution and variation, both in terms of culture and in terms of physical differences. Since humans were now known to have evolved from pre-human stages paleo-anthropology and archaeology were added to study the physiological and cultural evolution of humans to the Homo Sapiens stage.

Tylor, who held the first officially designated chair of anthropology, explained human cultural variations as stages of development of the same culture, what Ingold (1986) has called culture with a capital C. Thus there was but only one human Culture and all the differences that one could see across the globe were different stages of it. Tylor evoked the notion of psychic unity of mankind to determine the origin of an overtly human institution like religion by using what Evans-Pritchard has called the "If I were a horse hypothesis?" Thus Tylor put himself in the place of an early human to speculate what that person must have thought in the face of life's most mystical aspects, namely death and dreams. From this speculation Tylor derived the origin of religion as Animism or belief in a soul.

Tylor along with Lubbock described human evolution in terms of stages of evolution with an inbuilt notion of progress. Thus, Lubbock in 1871 published the book *Origin of Civilisation* where he identified the archeological stages of stone, copper and iron age with the stages of economic progress, namely savagery (hunting and food gathering) barbarism (nomadism and pastoralism) and then agriculture and then industrial civilisation. Tylor likewise in his book *Primitive Culture* (1871), identified three stages of progress of human Culture, savagery, barbarism and civilisation; the transition from the first to second marked by the advent of agriculture and from second to third by the invention of writing. Tylor used the concept of 'survivals' to substantiate his theory of evolution.

Lewis Henry Morgan was influenced by both Tylor and Lubbock and borrowed from them to write his *Ancient Society* (1877). He used the concept of Ethnical Periods, dividing each into three stages thereby converting the three stage developmental scheme into a more detailed and elaborate scheme of seven distinct ethnical periods. According to Morgan original ideas only occur once in human society and they are like germs that develop on their own into stages that are predetermined. He identified four main ideas, namely idea of government, idea of property, idea of family and idea of subsistence or technology. Each of these follows its own line of growth and each ethnical period is marked by successive stages of growth of these ideas.

2.4 THE PRIMITIVE AS A CONCEPT

Both sociology and social anthropology were made possible by a paradigm shift from a divine origin of human society to a conceptualisation of society as an outcome of human agency. The major transformations taking place in European society marked by the French Revolution and the transition to a industrialised society based on trade and commerce rather than war and conquest gave rise to the expectation that societies transform and therefore there must have been a past to the European society as it was existing in the eighteenth to nineteenth century. Much of sociological thinking was

directed towards understanding one's own past and in this attempt scholars like Comte, Spencer, Lubbock and others formulated an evolutionary schema of social development, always keeping the European societies at the apex. The influence of Lamarck is seen in the postulation of a stage by stage rather than a gradual evolution. And to Darwin we owe the consolidation of the entire human species as one supported by the theory of monogenesis and psychic unity of mankind. The idea of monogenesis and unity of the human race was also supported by the universal presence of family and marriage in the form of regulated mating and a universal acceptance of incest taboos and religion as a belief in the supernatural and mystical.

By the nineteenth century all theories of savages with no sense of kinship or morality was replaced by a universal humanism, only that it expressed itself in many different forms. Thus the question was no longer whether non-western societies have a religion or forms of marriage but why are the manifestations of these universal human institutions so varied in different parts of the world. The problem was not just to explain human evolution but human variation as well.

Tylor, found a solution in transforming spatial difference into temporal ones. In other words he put forward the thesis that those who were different were so because they were at different stages of Culture that was universal for all humans. To substantiate his arguments he made use of the comparative method borrowed from biology to put on a fictitious time scale all or most human cultures about which knowledge was obtained through various sources. Thus living populations were seen as the past of the European societies. The term primitive came to denote not people who were actually living in the past, but who were living as primitives in the contemporary world. The implications were far reaching, especially as it informed the notion of development as it is still understood, long after the demise of classical evolutionary theories. Many societies of the world were and are still judged as primitive meaning almost always that they do not fulfill the criteria of civilisation as embodied in western societies and those which are following the western model. To a large extent the branding of some cultures as lower stages of a common human culture gave a justification to European colonisation as it was presented not as an exploitative project but a reformative one.

2.5 SUMMARY

In summing up the unit we can say that the beginnings of positivism and the scientific study of society made social anthropology possible as a scientific study of human social and cultural variations. The nineteenth century was marked by a preoccupation with human evolution and the social scientists followed Lamarck in positing a stage by stage schema of evolution. The classical evolutionists were all unilineal influenced by the monogenesis theory of Darwin and the hypothesis of a psychic unity of mankind. The institutions of kinship, marriage and religion were of prime concern as universal traits of a common humanism. The methodology made use of the comparative method borrowed from biology. While sociology was a discipline that looked only into the evolution of European society, anthropology focused on entire mankind and in all aspects of being human, cultural, physical and species evolution.

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Suggested Reading

Ingold, Tim. 1986. *Evolution and Social Life*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Leaf, Murry. J. 1979. *Man, Mind and Science: A History of Anthropology*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Sample Questions

1) Describe the intellectual basis for the emergence of a science of society.

2) Discuss Montesquieu's contribution towards a sociological understanding of social variation.

3) What is positivism? Discuss Comte's contribution towards this theory.

4) Compare the approach of Comte and Montequieu critically.

5) What was Darwin's influence on the formation of a theory of social evolution?

UNIT 3 RELATIONSHIP OF SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY WITH ALLIED DISCIPLINES

Contents

Learning Objectives

Once you have studied this unit, you would be able to describe the:

➢ relation between social anthropology and the various allied sciences; and

➢ ability of social anthropology to interpret the biological and social factors to depict man's culture and behaviour in totality.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Social anthropology is that branch of anthropology which deals with human culture and society emphasising cultural and social phenomena including inter personal and inter group relations especially of non literate people. All social sciences study human behaviour, but the content, approach and the context of sociology and social anthropology are very different from other disciplines. Apart from studying the internal characteristics of the society, social anthropology also studies the external characteristics of the population and rate and stage of its progress. The problems of the society are explained using these factors. Secondly, it also studies institutions like – political, economic, social, legal, stratification, etc. It studies the features that these institutions share and the features that are different. Their degree of specialisation and level of autonomy are also studied. Durkheim, one of the pioneers of social anthropology called social anthropology as the study of social institutions. Thirdly, social anthropology is the study of social relationships. By social relationship we mean the interactions between individuals. Interactions between individuals are mediated by norms and values of the society and are intended to achieve goals.

3.2 RELATIONSHIP OF SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY WITH OTHER SOCIAL SCIENCES

The social and cultural anthropologists include a broad range of approaches derived from the social sciences like Sociology, Psychology, History, Economics, Political Science, Social Work, Cultural Studies, Literature, Public Health, Policy and Governance Studies, Management, etc. Social anthropology is, thus, able to relate all of these disciplines in its quest for an understanding of human behaviour, and draws upon all of them to interpret the way in which all biological and social factors enter to depict man's culture and behaviour in totality.

3.2.1 Social Anthropology and Sociology

Social anthropology usually has been defined as the study of other cultures, employing the technique of participant observation and collecting qualitative data. Social anthropology is similar to but not identical with sociology, at least in terms of how each discipline has developed since the last century. Social anthropology has focused on pre-industrial societies, sociology on industrial societies; anthropologists conducted their research in other cultures, employed the technique of participant observation (collecting qualitative data), and advocated comparative (especially cross-cultural) analysis; sociologists did research in their own societies, used questionnaires (collecting quantitative data), and rarely attempted to test their generalisations cross-culturally. Of course, there have been many exceptions to these patterns with the result that sociologists have sometimes resembled anthropologists in their labours, and vice versa (Barrett, 2009).

However, another way of examining the relationship between these two disciplines is by finding out the important differences. The first major difference is that while sociology is by definition concerned with the investigation and understanding of social relations and with other data only so far as they further this understanding, social anthropologists although they share the concern with sociologists, are interested also in other matters, such as people's beliefs and values, even where these cannot be shown to be directly connected with social behaviour. Social anthropologists are interested in their ideas and beliefs as well as in their social relationships and in recent years many social anthropologists have studied other people's belief systems not simply from a sociological point of view but also as being worthy of investigation in their own right.

The second important difference between social anthropology and sociology is simply that social anthropologists have mostly worked in communities which are both less familiar and technologically less developed, while sociologists chiefly studied types of social organisation characteristic of more complex, western –type societies. The distinction is by no means a hard and fast one; it implies difference in field rather than in fundamental theory, but it has important implications. It is in the study of small-scale systems of this kind, where person to person relationships are all important that the methods of social anthropology have been elaborated, and its main contributions to sociological knowledge have been in this field.

Finally, the fact that social anthropologists have mostly worked in unfamiliar cultures has imposed on them a problem of translation which is much less acute for sociologists, though it certainly exists for them too. Sociologists usually speak the same language (more or less) as the people they study and they share with them at least some of their basic concepts and categories. But for the social anthropologist the most difficult

part of his/her task is usually to understand the language and ways of thought of the people he studies, which may be and probably are very different from his own. This is why, in anthropological fieldwork, a sound knowledge of the language of the community being studied is indispensable for a people's categories of thought and the forms of their language are inextricably bound together. Thus questions about meanings and about the interpretation of concepts and symbols usually demand a larger part of the attention of social anthropologists than of sociologists. Never the less, sociology is social anthropologists' closest companion discipline and the two subjects share a great many of their theoretical problems and interests. Social anthropologists are sociologists as well, but they are at once something less, because their actual field of investigation has on the whole been more restricted and something more, because although they are concerned with social relationships, they are concerned with other aspects of culture as well. However, the top scholars in both social anthropology and sociology spend very little time in worrying whether what they are doing is sociology or social anthropology.

3.2.2 Social Anthropology and Psychology

The study of mind and human behaviour is called Psychology. Psychologists investigate a diverse range of topics through their theories and research. These topics include-the relationship between the brain, behaviour and subjective experience; human development; the influence of other people on the individual's thoughts, feelings and behaviour; psychological disorders and their treatment; the impact of culture on the individual's behaviour and subjective experience; differences between people in terms of their personality and intelligence; and people's ability to acquire, organise, remember and use knowledge to guide their behaviour.

Thus for the psychologists the focus of study is upon all aspects of human behaviour: and its personal, social and cultural dimensions which will never be complete without having the knowledge of social anthropology. Therefore, for understanding the social processes and meanings in the world around us one has to study social anthropology. Both **Social Psychology and Social Anthropology** deals with the manifold relations between individuals on the one hand and groups, communities, societies and cultures on the other hand.

According to Barrett (2009:135) British social anthropology has historically been quite opposed to psychology. Another way of stating this is to say that social anthropology has been anti-reductionist, which means opposed to reducing the explanation of social life to other disciplinary levels such as psychology. This perspective can be traced back to Durkheim, who declared that any time a psychological explanation is provided for a social phenomenon we may be certain that it is wrong. American cultural anthropology has been much more receptive to psychology, especially the focus on the individual. Boas was interested in the relationship between the individual and society, and eventually there was the culture and personality school, with its emphasis on modal personality. In more recent years a distinct approach called psychological anthropology has emerged, with a focus on attitudes and values, and child-rearing practices and adolescence (Bourguignon 1979).

The only line of difference is that social anthropology examines the group, psychology the individual. Social anthropologists specialise in social structure or culture psychologists in the personality system, and in mental process such as cognition, perception, and learning, and emotions and motives. Social anthropologists take personality system as constant and look for variation in the social structure as the

basis of their investigations whereas, psychologists accept the social structure as constant and look for variations in the personality system as the basis of their analysis.

Barrett (2009) in his work has stated that for both psychologists and anthropologists the only real entity is the individual human being. Social anthropologists abstract and generalise at the level of the social system whereas psychologists also abstract and generalise, but in their case at the level of the personality system. Finally, the work of some social anthropologists, sociologists and psychologists, occupies a common ground, reflecting shared interests in integrating social structure and personality.

3.2.3 Social Anthropology and History

Historians are chiefly interested in the past, whether remote or recent, their study is to find out what happened and why it happened. On the whole, they are more interested in particular sequences of past events and their conditions, than they are in the general patterns, principles or laws which these events may exhibit. In both of these respects their concern is little from that of social anthropologist. For social anthropologists are centrally (though not exclusively) interested in understanding the present condition of the culture or community which they are studying. But although the disciplines are different, social anthropology has a very close relationship with history in two important ways. First an anthropologist who aims to achieve a complete understanding as possible of the present condition of the society he is studying can hardly fail to ask how it came to be as it is. That is not withstanding that his central interest is in the present, not in the past for its own sake, but often the past may be directly relevant in explaining the present. A difficulty has been that many of the societies which social anthropologists have studied have no histories, in the sense of documented and verifiable accounts of the past or at least they had none before the often very recent impact of western culture. In such societies, the past sometimes is thought of as differing from the present only in respect of the individuals who occupy the different statuses which are institutionalised in the society.

But history may be important to social anthropologists in another sense, that is, not only as an account of past events leading up to and explaining the present, but also as the body of contemporary ideas which people have about these events what an English Philosopher Collingwood aptly called "encapsulated history" people's ideas about the past are an intrinsic part of the contemporary situation which is the anthropologists immediate concern and often they have important implications for existing social relationships. Also, different groups of people involved in the same social situation may have very different ideas about the 'same' series of historical events. Myths and traditional histories may sometimes give important clues about the past events. History is part of the conscious tradition of a people and is operative in their social life. It is the collective representation of events as distinct from events themselves. Evans-Pritchard in his work *Social Anthropology and Other Essays*, (1950) had stated that the functionalist anthropologists regard history in this sense, usually a mixture of fact and fancy, as highly relevant to a study of the culture of which it forms part. Neglect of the history of institutions prevents the functionalist anthropologist not only from studying diachronic problems but also from testing the very functional constructions to which he attaches most importance, for it is precisely history which provides him with an experimental situation.

It is true that some of the early anthropologists such as Radcliffe-Brown denied that history had any relevance for anthropology, mainly because they thought history dealt with unique events, and that a scientific study of the past was not possible. But,

Evans–Pritchard (1968) argued that anthropology was not a generalising discipline, but instead a branch of history. Much earlier Boas (1897), the founder of American anthropology, had included historical inquiry as a central feature of anthropological investigation.

Both social anthropologists and historians attempt to represent unfamiliar social situations in terms not just of their own cultural categories, but, as far as possible, in terms of the categories of the actions themselves. The main difference between social anthropology and history lies not much in their subject matter (though generally this does differ), as in the degree of generality with which they deal with it. Once again it is very much a question of emphasis. Historians are interested in the history of particular institutions in particular places. Although in a very general sense it is true that historians are concerned with what is individual and unique, social anthropologists, like sociologists, are concerned with what is general and typical, and this dichotomy is altogether too simple. As so often in the social sciences, the difference is largely one of emphasis (Ahmad, 1986)

Barrett, (2009) rightly summarises that today; most anthropologists would probably agree that a historical perspective enriches one's ethnography. Unlike historians, however, anthropologists include history not so much in order to document and explain what happened in the past, but rather to help to understand the present. There also appears to be a difference in styles of research. Whereas historians often seem reluctant to draw even modest generalisations from their data, anthropologists are much less cautious and there is more pressure than in history to tie one's ethnography to general theoretical orientations.

3.2.4 Social Anthropology and Economics

As we know economics focuses on a particular institution, and is concerned about the production, consumption, and distribution of economic goods, and with economic development, prices, trade, and finance. In anthropology there is an area of specialisation called economic anthropology. It is a precious fact that an institutionalised kind of economics first appears in anthropology in direct relation to the field research among exotic societies. Anthropology has a substantial overlap with economics, considered as the production and distribution of goods. While not all societies have a fully developed monetary economy, all societies do have scarce goods and some means of exchange.

Social anthropologists are interested in exploring the range of production and distribution systems in human societies and in understanding the particular system in the society being studied at a given time. Most social anthropologists are not scientifically interested in the operation of the economy of one's own society; the typical non-anthropological economist, on the other, hand is extremely interested in the operation of one's own economy. He will not ordinarily show much interest in the operation of greatly different economic systems. Social anthropology under the name of "formalist" vs "substantivist" interpretations of the primitive economics, bring with these terms the following option between the ready-made models of western economic science, especially the micro-economics taken as universally valid and therefore applicable to the primitive societies and the necessity – supposing the formalist position unfounded – of developing a new analysis more appropriate to the historical societies in question and to the intellectual history of anthropology.

3.2.5 Social Anthropology and Political Science

The foundation of anthropology was evolutionism, biology, and the great social theorists such as Marx, Weber, and Durkheim, whereas the foundation of political science was classical philosophy. While social anthropology deals with all the sub-systems of society, political science focuses on the political system and power. It would be a mistake, however, to assume that anthropology is not concerned with power. Edmund Leach (1965), a prominent British social anthropologist, has argued that power is the most fundamental aspect of all social life, and therefore central to the anthropological endeavour, and in fact there is an area of specialisation in anthropology called political anthropology.

Social anthropologists do look at something politically. There is a range of anthropological behaviours depending on the sophistication of the society being studied and the goals and theoretical awareness of the investigator. The overlap of political and other activities is greater in simpler societies than in more complex societies. To put it in a slightly different manner, there is less functional specificity of different cultural aspects. Or, in simpler societies activities that social anthropologists regard as clearly and predominantly political are usually embedded in other kinds of activities.

Political activity is an aspect of all human social action and "interest articulation" is a universal function of all systems. Social anthropologists represents a highly diverse set of policies for whom political theory should be applicable if such ideas lay claim to universality. For a political scientist the presence of anthropological literature is not only a stimulus to theory testing but forms a basis for understanding local political situations as well. The theoretical contribution that anthropology is making to political science, related to functionalism, is the evolutionary point of view. Cohen, (1967) stated that explicitly or implicitly, social anthropologists have almost always ordered the societies they study into an evolutionary framework. Research on the local areas and institutions of the new nation brings the political scientist and the social anthropologist into the same area treating with the same populations and many of the same behaviours. In many parts of the non-western world, local political systems are heavily dependent on forms of socio-political structures that are still strongly influenced by their traditional cultures. Social anthropology can aid political science in the analysis of ethnicity and in preparing researchers for the use of participant observation techniques in the field. Social anthropology on its side has a great deal to gain from political science, in terms of theory and more precise behavioural methods, which at this point of its development the discipline needs (R. Cohen, 1967).

3.2.6 Social Anthropology and Social Work

According to Keith Hart (1996 : 42) the only thing which can truly distinguish anthropology from the rest of the social sciences is that it addresses human nature plus culture plus society. The knowledge about society and culture is very important to the social worker. Social anthropology is the systematic study of social relationships at levels ranging from individual interaction to global political and economic relations. It also examines the cultural, historical, physical, and linguistic behaviour of people from all parts of the globe both in the past and present. Social workers help people in a number of ways including: dealing with their relationships with others; solving their personal, family, and community problems; and growing by learning to cope with or shape the social and environmental forces affecting their daily lives. Social workers practice their professions in specific social and cultural contexts which will definitely influence their mode of practice (Payne, 1997). They have to take into consideration the values, norms, beliefs, ideologies of the society before they create programs of action to ameliorate social problems and resolve conflicts.

Equally important is the necessity of the social worker to understand himself or herself. Social workers are themselves products of the societies that they live in and are inevitably influenced by it. Knowledge about society and culture is also needed to help the social worker gain self-awareness about himself or herself. The personality of the social worker is a major tool used in practice and culture plays a major role in the development of the personality.

Society and culture are basic concepts used by social anthropologists to understand the social reality around us. In social anthropology, we usually study the various comparative components of social system, their structure, their organisation, function, etc. The social systems are the interdependent activities, institutions, and values by which people live and it is the job of social anthropologists to identify these components of social systems. In social anthropology, various theories and concepts have been developed to understand the meanings of social structure, the social organisation and the social function.

Social anthropology and social work differ in many aspects. In social anthropology the approach to society is theoretical and theory building is its major concern. Social work on the other hand has to be practical and deal with problems. On the other hand, anthropologists find social worker's work to be fragmented and oriented only towards the problem at hand. Another important distinction between social work and social anthropology is that the latter made claims to be a value free discipline. Being objective and free from bias was considered a virtue. Social work on the other hand is a value based profession based on humanitarian principles (Johnson, 1998 : 14).

By going through the above discussion it is very much clear that social work often borrows from different disciplines from the wider society. Thus we may conclude by saying that unlike social anthropology, social work knowledge comes from a wider range of sources which includes precedent, experience and common sense.

3.2.7 Social Anthropology and Cultural Studies

Twenty first century world is moving towards a homogenous culture. Social scientists define Cultural studies as a combination of sociology, literary theory, film/video studies, and cultural anthropology to study various cultural phenomena in industrial societies. Researchers from Cultural studies basically concentrate on how a particular phenomenon is linked to matters of ideology, race, social class, and/or gender. Basically, Cultural studies deals with the meaning and practices of everyday life. Cultural practices comprise of the ways in which people do particular things in his/her own culture. In every culture specific meanings is attached to the ways people do things. Thus, cultural studies enable us to meaningfully engage and interact with the new modes of being and doing. It makes us conscious about the many complex ways in which power impinges on our lives and constructs our cultures. Cultural studies have the potential of empowering the society to critically read the media and other cultural institutions and texts. It also helps us to understand how they shape our identities and to think about how we could possibly shape them.

Thus, Cultural studies can be viewed as a historical, humanistic discipline, as well as a natural science, depending upon the method or approach which it is utilised in studying cultural phenomena. The traditional tendency to understand 'culture' as a naturalised concept is still quite dominant not only among the common folk in general but also among those engaged in the academic arena of culture. Such an understanding of culture also has its consequent reflection in the various forms of cultural activism

covering documentation, preservation, and conservation of culture. Thus, leading to the systematic classification of various cultural items like music, dance, literature, and language etc. and also assembling them in a hierarchy. Recent cultural theories have shown that classification of cultural objects is not exactly irrelevant, arranging them in a hierarchy like 'high' and 'low', 'great' and 'little' is definitely not desired because it is based on the celebration of the 'high' and 'elite' culture at the cost of the 'low' or 'folk' culture. However, at present, such terms like 'high' and 'low' are no longer used in cultural theories, because all cultures are considered as equal. According to social anthropological knowledge every culture has its own set of perspectives.

3.2.8 Social Anthropology and Literature

The scholars and academician very often question the validity of a strict disciplinary boundary between social anthropology and literature, at a time when schools and colleges are hiring faculties and establishing courses that speak to two or more disciplines. Literature may be used in the preparing of ethnography by social anthropologists, for example life histories of generations may be used as an important source of data. Collection of tradition narratives may add values to the ethnography of people. In studying the approaches to ritual and performance, Victor Turner uses poetry of contemporary as well as renaissance plays.

In the current attempts to redefine literature as social 'artifact' or social 'discourse', and to situate literary studies within cultural criticism, an indispensable role has been played by those who take society and culture as their primary subjects – sociologists and anthropologists (Ashley, 1990). Today, social anthropologists have come up with new ways to represent context and experience in the study of culture. Ethnography as text, narrative, allegory, and "true fiction" is the new approach.

Social anthropologists also use oral literature to study the unwritten forms which can be regarded as in some way possessing literary qualities. This avenue covers oral forms like myths, narratives, epics, lyrics, praise poetry, laments, and the verbal texts of songs; and also sometimes riddles proverbs and perhaps oratory and drama. This is an area in which both scholars from the field of literature, linguistic studies and folklorists have been interacting with social anthropologists for long.

Thus social anthropology and literature study with the purpose to integrate the literature experience into anthropology and to cultivate themselves as universal citizens. The intention to break the boundaries between literary study and other field of study and integrate literary study into cultural study is an evident important trend in the later 20th century. Clifford Geertz's role in the development of interpretive anthropology can hardly be overestimated. He remains one of the most productive and well-known social anthropologists. Yet today, within interpretive anthropology itself, critics of Geertz are increasing and his influence is waning. What is "thick description"? What are its main characteristics? How is it done? How do we come to know "the native's point of view", that is, how members of another culture think, feel and perceive? What is the relationship between "thick description" and anthropological theory? etc. are some of the rising questions.

Thus it shows similarity to interpretive anthropology which is mainly concerned with acquiring the native's point of view. It takes care of some of the pertinent questions like - How are we to approach and read native history and literature? Can we use such native expressions as data, as cultural artifacts? What modifications might the ethnographer have to make in doing so? These are some of the questions which would involve literature to answer them.

3.2.9 Social Anthropology and Public Health

Public health is "the science and art of preventing disease, prolonging life and promoting health through the organised efforts and informed choices of society, organisations, public and private, communities and individuals (Winslow, C.E.A.1920).The relationship between anthropology, medicine and medical practice is well documented. General anthropology occupied a notable position in the basic medical sciences (which correspond to those subjects commonly known as pre-clinical). However, medical education started to be restricted to the confines of the hospital as a consequence of the development of the clinical gaze and the confinement of patients in observational infirmaries (Foucault, 1963). Most, not all because ethnography remained during a large part of the twentieth century as a tool of knowledge in primary health care, rural medicine, and in International public health. The abandonment of ethnography by medicine happened when social anthropology adopted ethnography as one of the markers of its professional identity and started to depart from the initial project of general anthropology.

The concept of *popular medicine*, or *folk medicine*, has been well known to both doctors and anthropologists since the beginning of the twentieth century. Doctors, anthropologists and medical anthropologists used these terms to describe the resources, other than the help of health professionals, which European or Latin American peasants used to resolve any health problems. The term was also used to describe the health practices of aborigines in different parts of the world, with particular emphasis on their local knowledge. Moreover, studying the rituals surrounding popular therapies served to challenge Western psychopathological categories, as well as the relationship between science and religion. Doctors were not trying to turn popular medicine into an anthropological concept; rather they wanted to construct a scientifically based medical concept which they could use to establish the cultural limits of biomedicine (Comelles, 2002).

Professional anthropologists started using the concept of folk medicine in the early twentieth century. They used this concept to differenciate between *magical practices*, *medicine* and *religion*. In addition, they also applied this concept to explore the role and the significance of *popular healers* and their self-medicating practices. The professional anthropologists looked at popular medicine as specific cultural practice of some social groups which were distinct from the universal practices of biomedicine. Thus, it may be assumed that every culture has its own specific popular medicine based on its general cultural features.

Under this concept, medical systems are seen as the specific product of each ethnic group's cultural history. Scientific biomedicine is regarded as another medical system and therefore a cultural form is studied as such.

Reflection

The proposition of studying cultural form as it is originated in the 'cultural relativism' in cultural anthropology and allows the debate with medicine and psychiatry to revolve around some fundamental questions like- (i)What is the relative influence of genotypical and phenotypical factors on personality and what are the forms of pathology; especially psychiatric and psychosomatic pathologies?(ii) What is the influence of culture on what a society considers to be normal, pathological or abnormal?(iii)Verifies in different cultures the universality about the non sociological categories of biomedicine and psychiatry.(iv)How to identify and describe the diseases belonging to specific cultures which have not been previously described by clinical medicine? Such culture specific diseases are known as ethnic disorders and, more recently been termed as culture bound syndromes, that include the evil eye and tarantism, being possessed or in a state of trance in many cultures, and nervous anorexia, nerves and premenstrual syndrome across societies.

The medical anthropologists of twentieth century have a much more sophisticated understanding of the problem of cultural representations and social practices related to health, disease, medical care and attention.

source: http:en.wikipedia.org/wiki/medical_anthropology#popular_medicine_and_medical_system.

The imperative of social anthropological perspectives, methods, information, and collaboration in the understanding and practice of public health is widely reckoned in the twenty first century. Social anthropologists develop and implement interventions to address particular public health problems, often working in collaboration with local participants. Their primary task is to work as evaluators, examining the activities of public health institutions and the successes and failures of public health programs. Their job is also to focus on major international public health agencies and their workings, as well as public health responses to the threats of infectious disease and other disasters. Thus the role of social anthropologists in public health is to examine the health related problems with a social anthropological perspective like (i) socio anthropological understanding of public health problems (ii) socio anthropological design of public health interventions (iii) socio anthropological evaluations of public health initiatives (iv) socio anthropological critiques of public health polices and health care reforms. Thus, the role of social anthropology is to bridge the difference in culture and society in the practice of public health (Mahn and Inhorn, 2011).

3.2.10 Social Anthropology and Policy and Governance

As we enter the twenty first century, the terrain on which social policy is made is changing rapidly. This has resulted in anthropologists, in combination with other social scientists, giving serious attention to the impact of this new phase of globalisation on changes in social and environmental policies. Social anthropology as a sub field has contributed, and continues to contribute, to social policy research, practice, and advocacy in a number of different ways; it has taken on increasing relevance as the world is rapidly being transformed by the process of globalisation (Okongwu and Mencher, 2000). Social anthropologists studying globalisation, the state, politics, development, and elites, among other topics, are discovering the centrality of policy to their research, and a body of work in the anthropology of policy is developing. Although some social anthropologists who study policy became involved in public debates or advocacy, and several movements in anthropology encourage activism, the anthropology of public policy is devoted to research into policy issues and processes and the critical analysis of those processes. Though anthropologists have generally had less influence than economists on public policy, there are a number of ways in which we have made our opinions known, such as by (a) documenting the conditions of the people we study, or other poor or disenfranchised people, and acting as their advocates-including serving as expert witnesses for the homeless (b) analysing, writing, and making public the effects of government policies and suggesting alternative policies (c) working with-or against-elected officials; (d) attempting to influence members of aid agencies in their varied roles and/or working from within these agencies to pinpoint critical issues (e) working with migrant populations, both forced and voluntary in terms of both policies to deal with migrants and studies of cultural capital and its intersection with both formal and informal labour markets in the north and south and (f) studying strategies of resistance and how the work of anthropologists can inform and help indigenous people (Wedel, et al. 2005).

There has long been a theoretical and individual divide between anthropologists focusing on pure research and those focusing on the problems faced by humans, including the growth of inequality. In a fast changing world, anthropologists' empirical

and ethnographic methods depicts how policies actively create new categories of individuals to be governed. Wedel, (2005) suggest that the long-established frameworks of "state" and "private", "local" or "national" and "global," "macro" and "micro," "top down" and "bottom up," and "centralised" and "decentralised" not only fail to capture current dynamics in the world but actually obfuscate the understanding of many policy processes.

Although some social anthropologists worked in earlier periods on policy-related projects in agriculture, the numbers of anthropologists in applied and policy work on the environment and in the field of agriculture have significantly increased as the multinational corporations have gained in power over governments. Anthropologists have been interested in such issues as the scale of farming, water use, use of petrochemicals and other inputs, increase in mono cropping (with all of its attendant potential for future famines), and quality- of-life issues. Others have been involved with issues related to the loss of biodiversity, and especially among ethno botanists working with centers for international agricultural research to help traditional societies preserve their native species. Most of the anthropologists working on agricultural and related issues have "in one way or another [been] critical of the dominant institutions and trends in food systems (Okongwu and Mencher, 2000), especially those [moving more and more] toward globalisation. Many others present alternative approaches, often stressing the importance of strengthening local food systems as a way of trying to provide not only buffers, but new organisational and institutional models for more sustainable and just food systems". Giddens (1990, 1995) has noted that social anthropology must be ready to contest unjust systems of domination, seeking to decide along the way what injustice actually is, and to bring potential controversial issues to light.

Social anthropologists have traditionally had the reputation of working at the grassroot level and getting to know people and their problems and issues well. We also need to serve as conduits for solutions. One of the greatest strengths of social anthropologists is their ability to view systems holistically-in this case to deal not only with the theoretical issues of political economy, but also to work to influence policymakers to pay attention to the social, structural, and economic consequences of globalised agriculture on both farmers and consumers, on communities, and, taking the environment into account, on the very nature of life on this planet (ibid).

Surely there are many roles for social anthropologists in documenting protests, as well as in getting onto policy-making boards and into circles where large agency policy is formulated. The crisis situations created by capitalism today require a real reinventing of anthropology, with social anthropologists not only studying alternative policies but also working as advocates and with the people they have studied to put pressures on governments, international agencies, and multinational corporations to get them to change. These are issues that are extremely well suited for the involvement of social anthropology during the twenty first century. It is expected that social anthropologists, based on their in-depth knowledge and their ability to learn how to use the language of influence effectively, need to make clear and short statements available to policymakers. If social anthropologists fail to influence the policy, then others with far less understanding and insight will do so to the detriment of humanity (Okongwu and Mencher, 2000).

3.2.11 Social Anthropology and Management

Over the last century, social anthropologists have created a discipline to make sense out of human behaviour through the culture concept, a holistic analytical approach, and empirical research. Although social anthropological concepts have been defined

largely in academia, the discipline has always had 'applied' practitioners working in areas like health care, education, business and industry. These practitioners have demonstrated time and again that an anthropological perspective has a great deal to offer the wider world. At first glance, the two professions – anthropology and management may appear highly dissimilar. But a closer look reveals many points of common interest. For example, like social anthropologists, management practitioners attempt to make sense out of human behaviour as they address the 'people' dimensions of doing business. Hence, there is an opportunity for a valuable exchange between social anthropologists and management practitioners. To some extent this is already taking place. Social anthropologists are working as consultants and many consultants are using an anthropological perspective perhaps without knowing it (NAPA Bulletin, 1990).

The almost exponential rate of change in the contemporary business world challenges business leaders in many ways. The survival of a business depends on management's ability to adjust to change. Social anthropology can help consultants and their clients respond successfully to five major trends that will shape the way we all live and work in the future (Giovannini & Rosansky, 1998). They are in the areas of –

1) Increasing Globalisation
2) Demographic Trends
3) Social Issues
4) Technological Innovation
5) Organisational Change

Social anthropology as a field science has great potential for informing multi-disciplinary research in management both conceptually and methodologically. Anthropology's main distinguishing method is participant observation which involves the anthropologist spending a prolonged period, doing fieldwork in an effort to gain an in-depth understanding of the organisation under study. By virtue of its eclecticism and experience of facilitating understanding of the processes of change across institutions and other social phenomena, anthropology can make a significant contribution to the implementation of knowledge management. Objective of social anthropology is to take accurate description of context and precise understanding of how those contexts are interpreted and experienced by participants. Ethnographic immersion is the methodology adopted. This enables the capture of elusive, ambiguous and tacit aspects of research settings, and also allows grounded theory to be generated from 'thick' or 'rich' data. Social anthropology, having taken into account recent developments in postmodern and critical thought, can contribute to the study, practice, and teaching of management in three categories.

Reflection

Linstead (1997) states that the focuses are on the following aspects; (a). *culture*, new theoretical lines of enquiry can be developed that reassess the significance of shared meaning and conflicting interests in specific settings; the concept of the symbolic in management can be critically elaborated; and modes of representation of management can be opened up to self-reflexivity; (b). *critique*, ethnography can be used to defamiliarise the taken-for-granted circumstances and reveal suppressed and alternative possibilities; new or unheard voices and forms of information can be resuscitated and used to sensitise managerial processes; and cognitive, affective, epistemological, ideological and ethical considerations can be linked in the same framework; (c). *change*, anthropological ideas and concepts can shape and reflect change processes and resolve unproductive dilemmas; and managerial learning can be enhanced by promoting the ethnographic consciousness as a way of investigating and understanding, an attitude of openness. Thus, we can say that social anthropology can state an example of the application of the approach in a management development programme, where teaching and research would progress in harness.

3.3 SUMMARY

Social anthropology is, thus, able to relate to almost all the disciplines in its quest for an understanding of human behaviour, and draws upon all of them to interpret the way in which all biological and social factors enter to depict man's culture and behaviour in totality.

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Sample Questions

1) Which disciplines are considered cognate disciplines of Social anthropology?

2) What is the contribution of Social anthropology in Sociology and Psychology?

3) Can the Historians study the particular sequences of past events and their conditions without incorporating social anthropological approach?

4) How are the disciplines of Cultural Studies and Literature related to Social anthropology?

5) What are the diverse roles of Social anthropologists in solving various problems of the traditional as well as contemporary society?