
UNIT 3 RELATIONSHIP OF SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY: OTHER BRANCHES OF ANTHROPOLOGY AND OTHER DISCIPLINES

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Learning Objectives

After reading this unit the learners would be able to comprehend:

- how anthropology is related with other social sciences;
- in what ways anthropological knowledge is useful in other social sciences; and the
- major shift in the domain of anthropology.

3.0 INTRODUCTION

The meaning and purpose of anthropology is the scientific study of humanity. Anthropology studies who (Hu)Man is, how they have evolved, why they look like the way they are, how they talk, why they act in a particular manner. Viewed from a macro perspective mankind all over the world shows some similarities and differences in appearance, language and behaviour. Human beings have been the object of

study for many other subjects too. Biological sciences, manifests, social sciences, all are concerned with the (hu)man and their works.

The domain of anthropology has no fixed boundaries. It does not restrict its study to any one group of people alone but extends it to the whole of the human population. Modern civilisations, contemporary emergent nations, the process of industrialisation, urbanisation and similar such areas also engage the attention of anthropologists. Anthropology in its microscopic outlook focuses on what is unique to each group of people and in its macroscopic outlook it comprehends the features of each culture in relation to those of others. In the previous unit we have discussed the history and development of social and cultural anthropology. This unit will help you to comprehend how anthropology is related to other social sciences.

3.1 REALTIONSHIP WITH SOCIOLOGY

The social science that is closest to social anthropology is sociology. Yet there are strong and divided views on the relation between them. Each claims to study society not just a single aspect of it such as economics and politics but all of it. Sociology is much older than social anthropology and began with Auguste Comte in France and Herbert Spencer in England. The two men who are regarded as the founders of the British tradition in anthropology, Malinowski and A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, the latter in particular drew on the ideas of the French sociologists of the late nineteenth century and A.R. Radcliffe-Brown in a presidential address to the Royal Anthropological Institute said he was quite willing to call the subject comparative sociology if anyone so wishes. Many of the newer British universities have combined departments in sociology and anthropology. However, Universities give separate degrees in the two subjects so there must be a reason for this. The reason is a simple one but it is a matter of practice rather than theory, they deal with different subject matter and to a large extent by different methods. It might be noted that they are the branches of the study of society as botany and zoology are branches of biology.

Anthropology and sociology provide a comparative framework for interpreting and explaining human social behaviour. Although each discipline arose in response to different historical circumstances which have resulted in somewhat different traditions of emphasis and approach, the two fields draw from a common body of theory and, increasingly, a common toolkit of research methods. With the study of anthropology and sociology one will become familiar with a wide range of human societies in all regions of the world. They will gain an appreciation for the cultural complexity, historical context, and global connections that link societies and social institutions to one another. They will also learn about key social structures and dynamics embedded in contemporary societies, including the forms of social power and privilege that exist in any society, and how these often unequal power relations are organised, sustained, reproduced, and transformed.

Anthropology is the comparative study of human kind, its aims are to describe, analyse and explain both the similarities and differences among human groups. Anthropologists are interested in characteristics that are typical or shared in a particular human population, rather than what is abnormal and individually unique. In their study of human variation anthropologists tries to focus on the differences among the different groups rather than the differences among the individuals within those groups. In their attempts to explain human variation anthropologists combine the study of both human biology and the learned and shared patterns of human behaviour which we call culture. Because anthropologists have this holistic approach to the study of human experience they are interested in the total range of human activity.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1. Who suggested the term comparative sociology for the subject social anthropology?

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- 2. What is the subject matter of sociology?

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3.2 RELATIONSHIP WITH PSYCHOLOGY

The concept of personality is the basis of psychological studies. Anthropologists approach this domain from defining personality in terms of culture. Several important approaches to the study of structure of personality have arisen over the years. Within the socio-cultural milieu, the process of personality formation is studied. The key concepts of socialisation and enculturation are utilised in this study. Various types of child rearing practices in different societies are investigated in order to assess their implications for the development of personality.

In short, culture is reflected in personalities and personalities reflect culture. Psychological anthropologists divide the cultural institutions of a society into primary or basic and secondary or projective. The former comprises the geographical environment, the economy, family, socialisation practices, the polity while the latter comprises of myth, folklore, religion, magic, art etc. While the basic institutions condition personalities, personalities construct the secondary institutions. The relationship between culture and personality in each society of the world is studied by the psychological anthropologists.

Efficient studies by psychological anthropologists were not taken up till 1920s. The earlier work of some of these scholars lacked scientific vitality. The fundamental human conflict which is in between human and personal needs is multiple and must be thoroughly investigated at individual as well as social level concurrently. This aspect was realised but neither psychologists nor anthropologists alone could adequately manage all the spheres of the problem in the support of one single discipline. This understanding gave rise to the need for a two-way endeavour between psychologists and anthropologists.

Check Your Progress 2

- 3. What is the basis of psychological studies?

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4. What is the focus of psychological anthropologists?

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3.3 RELATIONSHIP WITH HISTORY

Anthropology and history both attempt to trace the origin, expansion and advancement of culture in the past. Here we mean the age when human beings had not attained the competence of using the language as speech and also to write. Archaeologists are labelled as the historians of anthropology because they attempt to reconstruct the events of human's past. However, unlike the discipline of history which is concerned only with the past 5000 years during which human beings has left behind written materials of their accomplishments, the archaeologist is concerned with the millions of years in which human beings developed culture without the benefit of the written word and has left behind only unwritten materials or artefacts.

In this sense anthropologist studies past cultures and tell us about the technology of past peoples by analysing the tools those people use in the past. Making it a basis this can throw light on the economic endeavours of the people who really have utilised that technology. This artistic potential of people become visible by seeing the remains of wall engravings on different materials like on pottery, jewellery etc. The settlement evidences of the houses can also focus on various spheres of social structure. Some facets of religious beliefs can also be determined by the burial sites and also by the materials kept inside or with the burials.

The main methods of archaeological anthropologists are therefore, excavation to find out artefacts followed by dating to dispense a rough time period and witty speculations to form the cultural history of one's past. In all these efforts the anthropologists focuses on the studies related to reconstruction of the past cultures by different methods of exploration which is a method known to infer the unknown from those materials that are very well known.

Check Your Progress 3

5. What is the common study area of the anthropologists and the historians?

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6. Which period of human past is studied by historians?

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7. What is the main method used by the archaeological anthropologists?

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3.4 RELATIONSHIP WITH ECONOMICS

Economic anthropology is the cross cultural comparative study of economic systems. The nature of economic transaction and economic process covers production, consumption, distribution and exchange of products.

Anthropologists concentrate on these activities mainly in tribal and peasant societies. They focus on the different ways of exchanges including ceremonial exchanges. The theory of reciprocity and redistribution are vital here. The environment of trade and market systems is also a very vital part of their study. The progression of economy and its development in societies is finally studied. What is crucial to note here is that the economic works of man are not studied in segregation but in their socio-cultural environment with the focus on those socio-cultural factors that manipulate and establish economic activities in each society. The effort in this way has boosted hot discussions between the formalists and substantivists i.e. those who agree that the concepts formulated in this direction of Economics are likewise ample in clearing up economic processes in simple societies, and those who contradict by disagreeing that the economy of each society is rooted in the bed of culture and so the economic theories that have been formulated with the current monetised systems in mind do not find a realistic position in the anthropology of simple societies.

Check Your Progress 4

8. What is economic anthropology?

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3.5 RELATIONSHIP WITH POLITICAL SCIENCE

The focus of political anthropology is on the following aspects: The ubiquity of political process and the functions of legitimate authority; law, justice and sanctions in the simple societies; political organisation in egalitarian and stratified societies; locus of power and leadership; the anthropological points of view in the formulation of the typology of political structures based on differences and similarities observed among the societies of the world; the political process among emerging nations and complex societies; political culture and the nation-building processes. In the study of all these aspects of the political systems of the world is perceptible the undercurrent of the socio-cultural mains.

A part of wider observable fact of social organisation means to the association of human to human relations which are planned for the continuation of inner order in the society and external harmony. The former is attained by the law and order apparatus, decision of disputes and some system of implementation of justice. The

latter is attained by conclusions of peacekeeping and war. Anthropologists those who study all these facts and systems related to authority among simple societies and other societies were called by the term political anthropologists. Political anthropology has emerged as a offshoot of social cultural anthropology which mainly concentrates on political institutions in context to and other spheres of culture. It is known as cross cultural and comparative study of political organisations.

Check Your Progress 5

9. What is the political anthropology?

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3.6 RELATIONSHIP WITH MANAGEMENT SCIENCE

It has recently been the trend among editors and scholars to deplore the changes brought about in human relations by science and technology and to vow that salvation can only be attained if we turn back to the humanities and have less rather than more science. We all see that changes in technology produce their results by disturbing the equilibrium of individuals and groups. If we are to keep technology from running away with us this can only be done by using anthropological methods that is, by utilising the science of human relations. This has prompted administrators and other working in this field to use anthropology not merely in accomplishing a desired objective but to also learn to formulate their objectives in terms of known principles of anthropology that concerns human behaviour and relations.

Moreover, the use of anthropological method and principles enables the administrator to estimate the state of equilibrium in the system of human relations in the institution for which s/he is responsible and make such adjustments as are necessary. By instituting methods of control through periodic assessment of human relations and thus determining the precise nature of the adjustments at any given time, they will be able to perfect the organisation and bring about a more satisfactory adjustment for all the individuals who compose it. Management sciences have recently developed this field and the intake of students from anthropology background has increased. Both the disciplines apart from the interpersonal relationship and human relations focus on the applicability of research on society. Travel management, rural management, wildlife management, environment management are few of the examples in this context.

Check Your Progress 6

10. How is management sciences using anthropological knowledge?

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3.7 RELATIONSHIP WITH BIOLOGICAL SCIENCE

Biological anthropology is the study of human as an organism. The species *Homo sapiens sapiens* are the object of investigation in this branch of anthropology. There are three important aspects concerning the study of human beings. They are human biology, human evolution and human variation. The biological aspect includes the anatomical, physiological, and morphological features. The study of human genetics and human types are two crucial domains that contribute to the understanding of human biology, evolution and variation. However, all these different angles of vision are brought together to throw light on the bio-physical nature of human.

One may ask how this branch of anthropology is different from the biological sciences that also study human beings as an organism. It is the recognition of the pervasive influence and impact of culture on biology of human beings that makes physical anthropology distinctive. One of the most popular issues for debate and discussion among anthropologists is that of missing link. The fossil remains of the creature that would serve to pinpoint the actual point of departure and differentiation between the apes like ancestors of human is yet to be discovered and established conclusively by consensus.

The theories of organic evolution developed by biologists have their impact in anthropological studies. Lamarckism, Darwinism and synthetic theory which are based on the evidences derived from the other biological forms are useful in comprehending the evolutionary processes of human who is also a biological organism. Based on the information derived from the biological sciences the cultural dimensions of biological evolution of human beings are investigated.

Check Your Progress 7

11. What is the focus of biological anthropology?

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12. Name the three important aspects of human beings that biological anthropologists studies?

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3.8 RELATIONSHIP WITH LINGUISTICS

One of the most distinctive features of human being is the ability to communicate through speech. The branch of socio-cultural anthropology that studies languages is called Linguistic anthropology. Linguistic anthropologists account for the diversity of languages in two ways:

- 1) It can be shown that culture influences the structure and content of language, and by implication, linguistic diversity arises at least partially from cultural diversity.

2) It can also be shown that linguistic features affect the other aspects of culture.

In order to reveal the relationships between language and culture, anthropologists have taken either paths of the mentioned two ways, which has resulted in debate and discourse on the matter. The linguistic anthropologist borrows from the socio-cultural anthropologist. The meaning and content of words and phrases in each language have unique nuances that are intelligible only to the people who speak that particular language which is a product of their culture. The language of some people may not have referential terms for certain features of the world around them. These give the clues to those features which do not hold any cultural significance to that people.

The major difference between the linguists and linguistics anthropologists is that the former are mainly concerned with the study of how languages particularly written ones are constructed and structured but the linguistic anthropologists study unwritten languages as also written languages. Another crucial difference between linguists and linguistic anthropologists is that those features which the former take for granted are taken into consideration by the latter. These features relate to the systems of knowledge, belief, assumptions and conventions that produce particular ideas at particular times in the minds of people.

Check Your Progress 8

13. How does the linguistic anthropologists account for the diversity of languages?

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14. State the major difference between a linguist and linguistic anthropologist.

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3.9 RELATIONSHIP WITH DEMOGRAPHY

Demography is statistically inclined and is mainly concerned with the vibrant forces defining population size and their structure and also on their variation across time and space. On the other hand the anthropologists are interpretive and put an eye on the social organisation and how it shapes the production and reproduction of human populations. Anthropological demography is a part and parcel of the demography subject which gathers information from anthropological theory and methods to give us a better improved understanding of demographic issues in present and past populations. Its beginning and growth rests at the junction between social-cultural anthropology and demography and with main focus on migration, population processes specially fertility and mortality. Some very good demographers have turned towards culture through the use of different anthropological methods as means of enhancing their data. Both the disciplines have started taking help of each other. These two disciplines share together some of the common interests while dealing with population studies.

The foremost theoretical concepts which are dealt in anthropological demography are gender culture, and political economy. Fieldwork and empirical approach includes a blend of quantitative and qualitative methodologies applied to the research studies. Ethnographic fieldwork and participant observation are essential to this approach. Demography is the statistical study of varied human population. It can be considered as a very general science that can be functionally applied to any kind of dynamic living population.

Check Your Progress 9

15. What is demography?

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3.10 RELATIONSHIP WITH PHILOSOPHY

Anthropology and philosophy, both the disciplines are related to each other as both have logical foundations. The boundaries between the two strong disciplines have always been porous. The subject matter of anthropology as discussed in the earlier units deal with the varied cultures across globe. The religious foundations of all the cultures are dealt by both the disciplines. Anthropologists have many times concentrated and borrowed the subject matter of philosophy; similarly the other discipline has always relied on the findings of anthropology. Anthropologists have always tried to relate the philosophical foundations of the culture with the present culture and the real present life of the people by their own traditional method of ethnography. Further, if we talk about anthropology in combination with philosophy or philosophy with anthropology they have helped us to explain the present path of thought of being unbiased on fields and also a non-ethnocentric approach which were uncared by many contemporary social scientists.

Check Your Progress 10

16. State whether the following statement is true or false: “Anthropology and philosophy as disciplines are related to each other as both have logical foundations.”

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3.11 RELATIONSHIP WITH CULTURAL STUDIES

Socio-cultural anthropology is the study of people and their ways of life. Within this branch of anthropology, there are two sub-branches viz., social anthropology and cultural anthropology, which are however inter linked and intertwined. Social anthropology is concerned with the manner in which people associate and group themselves, while cultural anthropology is concerned with the habits and customs of the people. The concept of society is uppermost in the minds of social anthropologist, and the concept of culture is crucial to the cultural anthropologist. ‘Society’ denotes

the collection of individuals who live together in the same place, and lead the same kind of living styles. ‘Culture’ refers to the learned behaviour, knowledge, belief, morals, values, art, and all other customs acquired by human beings as a member of society which is passed on from one generation to the next through the process of socialisation and enculturation (Tylor 1871).

The job of the anthropologist is to study societies and culture, in order to scientifically abstract and generalise about humanity. This work comprises of two important dimensions: (i) to determine people’s notion of how they ought to be, and (ii) to describe how the people actually are. The socio-cultural anthropologist is particular about not losing sight of any feature of the social and cultural domains of people. Thus, in the life of an individual within society, right from pregnancy, childbirth, puberty, marriage to death, all the features that are culture-specific including the rituals and ceremonies associated with each event in the life-cycle of an individual are all observed and studied carefully under cultural studies.

The information regarding all the spheres of life in human society and culture that socio-cultural anthropologists gather, are classified, organised and analysed to formulate theories regarding mankind. The history of anthropological theory reveals the various attempts to account for the origin, spread, growth, structure and function of human cultures.

Check Your Progress 11

17. What is the focus of cultural studies?

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3.12 SUMMARY

The meaning and purpose of anthropology is scientific study of humanity. The inherent curiosity of human about them was the prime factor influencing the emergence of the discipline that systematically studied mankind. In an attempt to answer the questions regarding human beings anthropology studies who human is, how s/he evolved, why s/he acts in a particular manner. The ultimate aim of studying human beings is not in merely acquiring knowledge regarding them, their society and culture, but in applying the knowledge so gained in solving the practical problems faced by mankind all over the world. In this effort, the anthropologists often work closely with the administrators of the government. Anthropology is interested in comprehending humanity in its totality. It is concerned with all the varieties of human population, however small or big, in any and every part of the world, both past and present.

3.13 REFERENCES

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3.14 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. A.R. Radcliffe-Brown suggested that social anthropology may be termed as comparative sociology.
2. refer to section 3.1
3. refer to section 3.2
4. refer to section 3.2
5. refer to section 3.3
6. refer to section 3.3
7. refer to section 3.3
8. refer to section 3.4
9. refer to section 3.5
10. refer to section 3.6
11. refer to section 3.7
12. refer to section 3.7
13. refer to section 3.8
14. refer to section 3.8
15. refer to section 3.9
16. True
17. refer to section 3.11