
PRACTICAL MANUAL

Contents

- 1.0 Introduction
- 1.1 About Fieldwork
- 1.2 Fieldwork Tradition in India
- 1.3 What is Ethnographic Research?
- 1.4 Research Methodology in Anthropology
- 1.5 Summary
- 1.6 References

Learning Objectives

After reading this manual the learner would be able to comprehend:

- the meaning and purpose of fieldwork and ethnography;
- fieldwork tradition in India;
- what is ethnography and its characteristics; and
- research methodology in anthropology.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Anthropology is a “field science”. This is because in its study of human beings, both socially and biologically, the subject anthropology depends on authenticating its data from real experiences and knowledge. This reality is captured not by suppositions and theories but by gathering first hand data and knowledge from the field. This is where fieldwork as an approach of study comes in. "Fieldwork" is research that takes place away from the laboratory, office, or classroom. The fieldwork site can be anything such restaurant in metro city, burial ground, a village tribal village, and a colony in city etc. Depending on the project work, researcher may live there for weeks or months at a time. For example, you may spend a year in Andaman studying tribal community while living in a tent. Or you may spend two weeks describing artifacts at archeological site. This unit will discuss the relevance of fieldwork, what ethnography is and how to conduct ethnographic research and also discuss the methods of data collection in anthropology.

1.1 ABOUT FIELDWORK

Fieldwork is a vital part of being an anthropologist. It is central to the inquiry of anthropology. Fieldwork improves our knowledge of humans and human ancestors. Fieldwork also allows us to get out of the routine classroom and explore exciting places around the world. Sometimes researchers don't have

to travel to an exotic place to do fieldwork, though. He/She can do fieldwork in your hometown or even in your backyard. For example, you might study the problems of environment nearby location, which can provide solution to those problems that have occurred to the habitat where you live or to what people may have lived there before you. Fieldwork gives us an opportunity to meet and work with new people and have a hands-on experience with exciting projects. From fieldwork researcher collect measurements, observations, and other types of information that will help us answer our research questions. For a long term and big projects fieldwork besides the researchers and scientists, there is often a whole team of people involved in making a field season a success. College students often help researchers collect the data. Local people are also hired to help with travel, cooking, and data collection. To conduct the fieldwork different types of equipment are also needed in the field. For example, notebooks are used to record daily observations. The notes are then typed up on laptop, and computer. Researcher also needs a backpack to carry your day's supplies, a GPS (global positioning system) for hiking around a site, and a camera to capture images of everything from stone tools to catching primates behaviour. Anthropologists are often heading to their field sites whenever they required, but this can vary depending on weather conditions, access to the site, and what you're studying. Depending on the topic sometimes researcher can spend the whole year at your site. If, the researcher conducting an ethnographic study he/she may need to spend an entire year in the field to cover all the aspects of culture. Anthropological fieldwork has been characterised by the prolonged residence of the investigator, his participation in and observation of the society, and his attempt to understand the inside view of the native people and to achieve the holistic view of a social scientist" (cited in Robben and Sluka 2007: 7). Anthropologists may write up their collected data from the fieldwork in reports, articles, or journal contributions. Alternatively, they may describe their field experiences and findings in the form of ethnography.

Activity

Why fieldwork is important.

1.2 FIELDWORK TRADITION IN INDIA

The anthropological study of Indian society is recent in origin. During 18th century A.D. the British government felt the necessity to have an ethnographic account on different tribes and castes of India with a view to rule them. Thus fieldwork and researchers of anthropological interest were started in India in 18th century A.D. by colonial administration, missionaries, and some orientalist, who wanted to know the Indian culture. Most of the ethnographic work was published on traditions, customs and beliefs of tribes and other caste communities.

British anthropologists W.H. R. Riverse and A.R. Radcliffe-Brown came to India to conduct ethnographic studies on Indian tribes. Riverse came to India in 1904 and conducted study on Todas of Nilgiri Hills of South India which was published in 1906. Whereas Radcliffe-Brown came to India to study 'Onge' Tribe of Andaman Island in 1906 to 1908 and a monograph published in 1922.

S. C. Roy, the first Indian ethnographer conducted his study on culture of Chhota Nagpur and published his monograph *Munda and their Country* in 1912. He also conducted fieldwork among Bhuiyas of Orissa and published his book in 1935. L.K. Anantha Krishna Iyer carried out his fieldwork in south India and published his work on "*Cochin Tribes and Castes*" and *Tribe and Caste of Ernakulam*. During this period some scholars from abroad carried out the ethnographic works in India. These works include the following:

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

Indian anthropologist like D. N. Majumdar, T. C. Das, M. Chattopadhyay, I. Karve, A. Aiyappan started working and publishing in the areas of social institutions. Their extensive work on social institutions provided a long needed impetus to the development of social anthropology. These works include the following:

- *The Changing Ho* by D. N. Majumdar
- *Marriage and Family in Mysore* by M. N. Srinivas
- *Hindu Methods of Tribal Absorption* by N. K. Bose

Anthropologist D. N. Majumdar contributed immensely to tribal studies in India. He conducted fieldwork among the Ho tribes of Bihar. Majumdar's study on Ho in the Kolhan region of Chhotanagpur was focused on culture contact and acculturation which became a basis for anthropology students. Many other foreigner scholars contributed problem-oriented works on tribes at this juncture. Foremost among them were Verrier Elwin and Christopher von Fürer-Haimendorf. Verrier Elwin worked on the tribes of Madhya Pradesh and Orissa. Among his books were:

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

During his popular work on the Baigas, he observed that Baigas were being destroyed by the landlords and the missionaries. In order to protect Baigas from exploitation Elwin suggested that the state should prevent or control

their interaction with outsiders. He also proposed to government that the tribes should be left alone and they should be allowed to develop on their own. Haimendorf was an Austrian ethnologist who spent nearly four decades in India. Among his books were:

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

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

Anthropologists and sociologists such as Morris Opher, Oscar Lewis and David Mandelbaum and their students came to India from America to study Indian society and culture. Many of these scholars did their fieldwork in Indian villages and tested their hypothesis on the village studies. This period was termed as analytical phase because of the shift from descriptive tribal studies to analytical village and castes studies of complex societies.

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

He also extended this study to understand the tribals' relationship with the nature. He was of opinion that simple societies and tribes were isolated from the mainstream of civilization. The Great Tradition had never been a part of their lives. In order to study such communities he developed the concept Nature-Man-Spirit complex. He found this complex to be of great value not only to study the Maler of Rajmahals hills but also in understanding the issues related to applied anthropology.

L. P. Vidyarthi study Munda village reflects how Manjhi, a section of Munda tribe, has adopted the Hindu style of life and become a caste. L. P. Vidyarthi published a book on Cultural Contours of Tribal Bihar (1966) explains the historical, geographical and social background of the tribes of Chhota

Nagpur. L. P. Vidyarthi and B. K. Roy Burman wrote a book under the title *The Tribal Culture of India* (1976). Taking data from secondary sources at the Indian level, the authors have attempted to present a comparative and comprehensive view on the social, economic, political and religious life of the Indian tribes. The book also presents a good amount of information on folklore, art, course of life and personality structure in the context of tribal India. The book highlights the character of tribal village, matriliney and polyandry in tribal India. It also deals with the approaches, planning and programmes for tribal development and cultural changes among the tribes of India.

M. N. Srinivas conducted ethnographic study among the Coorgs, he gathered data on marriage and family, which was published in 1942. M. N. Srinivas conducted his fieldwork in various communities in India in 1966 and published book on "*Social Change in Modern India*" in his study he has developed the concept *sanskritization*. He defined *sanskritization* as "the process by which a low caste or tribe or other group takes over the customs, rituals, ideology and style of life of a high and, in particular, a twice-born (*dwij*) caste". In simple terms *sanskritization* means people of lower caste imitate people of higher caste (cultural mobility) owing to their improvement in the economic or political position resulting from their contact with a source of the Great Tradition of Hinduism such as pilgrim centers. J. K. Bose on the basis of field study, he studied the changes taking place among the Garos in their new settlement with reference to their original settlement in Garo Hills.

Anthropologists from School of Chicago such as Robert Redfield, McKim Marriott, and Milton Singer studied the interaction between the Little and Great tradition as well as 'Folk-Urban Continuum' to understand the dimensions of Indian civilization.

McKim Marriot (1955) developed the concept of Universalization and Parochialization to put his idea *Little Communities in an Indigenous Civilization* as a sequel to Robert Redfield's Great Tradition and Little Tradition". He examined the socio-religious organization in an Indian village named Kishan Garhi in Uttar Pradesh to put forth his view. According to Marriot, the concept of universalization refers to the "carrying forward of materials which are already present in the little tradition which it encompasses" (1955). The opposite process, which he called parochialization, is defined by him as the "downward devolution of great traditional elements and their integration with little traditional elements. It is a process of localization.

Indian anthropologists such as N. K. Bose, D. N. Majumdar, and L. P. Vidyarthi studied the impact of industrialization on tribals. D. N. Majumdar was the first Indian to study and write about the impact of non-tribals on the life of Indian tribes. Social anthropology also developed the sub-field of

urban anthropology during this period. Indian anthropologists' research studies were more evident in the following areas:

- Medical anthropology,
- Anthropology of religion,
- Development Anthropology
- Urban Anthropology
- Anthropology of education
- Psychological Anthropology
- Tribal development
- Ethnic identities
- Folklore studies
- Applied and action Anthropology
- Anthropology of Advocacy
- Ecological Anthropology
- Women and Children Studies
- Migration and Labour Studies

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

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

Social anthropologists moved ahead from communities' studies to complex segments like caste politics, caste power relationship with social structure, without losing their identity as anthropologist. The mentioned classic ethnographic studies will provide models for future anthropologists. Learners must read the above ethnographies most them are available on internet.

Activity

Name the books of Verrier Elwin and Christopher von Fürer-Haimendorf

1.3 WHAT IS ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH?

Ethnography involves fieldwork. Ethnography can be briefly defined as the systematic study of people and cultures in their own environment through the use of methods such as participant observation and face-to-face interviewing. As anthropologist suggests, ethnography documents cultural similarities and differences through empirical fieldwork and can help with scientific generalizations about human behaviour and the operation of social and cultural systems (Sidky, H; 2004:9). Because anthropology as a discipline is holistic (meaning it looks at the past, present and future of a community across time and space), ethnography as a first hand, detailed account of a given community or society attempts to get a comprehensive understanding of the circumstances of the people being studied. Ethnographers, then, look at and record a people's way of life as seen by both the people and the anthropologist; they take an *emic* (folk or inside) and *etic* (analytic or outside) approach to describing communities and cultures. Ethnography is a qualitative research method. The term ethnography was originally used by anthropologists, who consider fieldwork a key part of their discipline, but is now used across a wide range of social sciences.

The main aim of the ethnographer is to describe the culture or way of life such as values, beliefs and practices of a particular group from within. This is done by understanding and communicating *what the events are or what is going on*, and *how the members of the group 'interpret' and 'understand' that event or what is going on*. In order to do this, the researcher needs to understand not only his or her own culture but also the culture of the group s/he is studying.

The purpose of ethnography is not to test what we know or think about a culture. Its main purpose is to explore cultural knowledge. Exploring here would mean first 'understanding' and 'discovering' the culture, then 'describing' it and then finally 'interpreting' it. Secondly, ethnography describes a culture from the point of view of its participants. This is the insider's or native point of view, which is referred to as *emic* perspective. In ethnography, the researcher must try to understand the world from the insider's point of view so as to discover how they see the world and ascribe meaning to it. In this sense, ethnography can then be used as a tool to discover the worldview of others.

Ethnography can be useful in several situations. It can be used as a method to gather research material or to gain an entry point for irrigation or water project or to establish relationship when one is a guest or an outsider in a particular context. Ethnography can also be used by third party interveners for facilitating or mediating in a conflict. Ethnography will help the third party to understand the worldviews of the two parties as conflicts are not just located in the material or social world but also in the symbolic world where worldviews are formed. This will help look into the structural causes of

individual and group behaviours as well as be useful in understanding how meaning, symbols and norms contribute to the making and enactment of individual and group behaviours. Parties can also use ethnography to understand each other’s perspectives without the help of a third party.

Activity

Name the books of Verrier Elwin and Christopher von Fürer-Haimendorf

1.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY IN ANTHROPOLOGY

In this section, an attempt has been made to describe briefly about research methods in anthropology. In anthropology there are two very important approaches in research design and in the overall research framework that is **inductive methods** and **deductive method**.

Deductive Approach	Inductive Approach
Research starts from a research question or hypothesis, and then involves collecting data	Research starts without a hypothesis and involves collecting data
Data is collected through observation, interviews, and other methods	Data is collected through unstructured, informal observation, conversation, and other methods
Data collect is likely to be quantitative data, or numeric information, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the amount of land in relation to the population. • the numbers of people with particular health problems. 	Data collected is likely to be qualitative, or non-numeric data, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recordings of myths and conversations. • filming of events.

Most anthropologists, combine deductive and inductive approaches and quantitative and qualitative data to varying degrees.

“In the early years, ethnographers were interested in exploring entire cultures. Taking an inductive approach, they generally were not concerned about arriving with a relatively narrow predefined research topic. Instead, the goal was to explore the people, their culture, and their homelands and what had previously been written about them. The focus of the study was allowed to emerge gradually during their time in the field. Often, this approach to ethnography resulted in rather general ethnographic descriptions. Today, anthropologists are increasingly taking a more deductive approach to ethnographic research. Rather than arriving at the field site with only general ideas about the goals of the study, they tend to select a particular problem

before arriving and then let that problem guide their research” (Nelson, 2018).

The first step in doing anthropological research (for that matter, any other research) is to come up with a research problem. Identification of research problem basically involves choosing a research topic. The ways and manners in which researchers identify a research problem and choose a topic vary according to various factors. The research interests of anthropologists are, often, triggered by their own life experiences and observations (Howard and Dunaif-Hattis, 1992). The initial ideas for research thus may occur at any time and place for a researcher. Walking down a street, reading through newspapers, watching television, etc may suggest a topic of research for an observing and curious person (Mann, 1976).

Research work normally proceeds by reviewing earlier works on a specific research problem one has identified. The researcher will need to review past works on the question he or she is raising (Dooley, 1995). The traditionally dominant source for literature review has been libraries and documentation centers where books and various references are found in card catalogued manner. Nowadays, most libraries maintain a computerized filing system, whereby references are made available via electronic online methods. Searching literature has become very easy, thus, with the computerization of library sources; one can easily access them if Internet connection is available (Rosnow and Rosenthal, 1996) Literature review is necessitated by the fact that a researcher is probably not the first person to develop an interest in a particular problem; and hence, he or she need to spend some time in the library reviewing what theories and methods others have used to the topic in the past and what findings are there (Macionis, 1997).

The research design is that section in the research process which gives the details of the ways and manners of conducting the study (*Ibid.*). It involves the selection of research sites and study subjects, the methods to be employed in collecting data, the techniques to be employed in data analysis and other related matters.

In an ethnographic study different methods are used based on the topic and aim of the research. Methods of the study are also dependent on the methodological positioning of the researcher that enables him to answer the relevant research question(s).

Some of the methods, tools and techniques that are used in ethnographic studies are:

- interview,
- observation,
- key informant,
- rapport building,

- questionnaire,
- Survey method
- focus group discussion,
- life histories,
- field diaries,
- historical method,
- genealogical method,
- participant observation.

According to Crowley-Henry (2009), “Given the variety of methods and data collection tools open to ethnographers, ethnography can be malleable to suit a particular research agenda, provided it is made clear how the researcher is using the approach in his / her particular research undertaking”. The underlying elements of ethnography are:

- the specificity of its study of a particular culture / subculture or population, and
- the use of observation in amassing field and contextual notes pertaining to that culture / sub-culture or population (Crowley-Henry, 2009).

The most vital anthropological method of data collection is extensive fieldwork, in which the researchers live among the societies studied and observe their ways of life intimately. A typical anthropological research method is participant observation, in which the researcher learns about a society living among them and participating in their daily lives.

Anthropological research is historical, comparative and cross-cultural. In comparative approach, a research anthropologist studies a culture or society at two different point of time. Recognizing that the cultural system of a people is constantly changing, anthropologist have divided studies into two parts:

- studies that describe a culture at one period in time (synchronic study).
- studies that describes the changes in culture of a people over time (diachronic study).

Comparative method is the method of the comparison between different societies, groups or social institutions. The objective of this method is to investigate whether and why the societies under observation are similar or different in certain aspects.

Ethnology is a branch of social cultural anthropology that conducts research on comparative study of different cultures. Cross-cultural comparison refers to the method of studying cultural phenomena across cultures of the identical period. In this particular branch, a researcher collects descriptive data from different societies and then analyzes, interprets, and compares the results of

ethnography. These data are used to compare and contrast and to make generalizations about society and culture.

The history of cross-cultural comparison dates back to the late 19th century when E B Tylor and LH Morgan who developed unilineal evolution theory also called cultural evolution (the idea that cultures evolved in a progressive manner, from simple to complex). In anthropology this is the first systematic ethnological theory explain diversity among peoples of the world. However, there were some serious methodological problems in this early comparative research which resulted in the abandonment of this approach. Later this approach was modified by G. P. Murdock who stated that Culture and its peculiarities cannot be adequately understood simply by studying single cultures. Cultures should be compared with one another in order to interpret the similarities and differences across various cultures.

Historical approach refers to studying a phenomenon in historical sequence and hence it facilitates comparison across time. Franz Boas, “the father of American anthropology,” is the founder of historical approach. Boas pointed at the limitations of comparative method and suggested using comparisons within a small well-defined geographical area. Historical method is primarily concerned with the past and attempts to trace the past as a means of understanding the present.

History is the study of the past and nobody can negate history. Boas was of the notion that each and every culture has its own separate past and each culture is “one of a kind”— that is, different from all others. Each society and culture has its own particular set of circumstances such as geography, climate, resources and particular cultural borrowing. Because each culture was affected by almost everything that had happened to it in the past, and because different things had happened to different cultures, each culture is unique. Evans Prichard has also emphasized on the importance historical approach in anthropology. He argued that that functioning of society cannot be understood without understanding its history. Hence, if anybody wants to study the origin and development of society and culture and how its social institutions have evolved, a historical approach is the only option.

Activity

Distinguish between the deductive do inductive approaches.

1.5 SUMMARY

Ethnographic fieldwork is the unique strategy that anthropologists particularly Socio-cultural anthropologists have developed to put people first as we analyze how human societies work. Anthropology as a field science employs the scientific method that involves systematic collection and

analysis of data for research. Anthropologists use different methods, tools, techniques and approaches to study society and culture.

Ethnography means a systematic detailed study about a particular culture or society, primarily based on fieldwork. Anthropology also depends on the deductive and inductive approaches in research, where the former focused on testing hypothesis on the basis of general theoretical principles where as the latter tries to build theories based on particular observations.

Anthropological research is comparative and cross-cultural. Anthropology emphasizes an insider's view of a society. This is what anthropologists call the *emic* view; Involving an approach to gathering data that investigates how local people think and how they understand the world. However, the anthropologist also, as a scientist, gives equally much value to the *etic* view; Involving description of local behavior and beliefs from the anthropologist's perspective in ways that can be compared across cultures.

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