



ANTHROPOLOGY

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UNIT 1

1. Meaning of Anthropology

The term Anthropology is derived from Greek term "*Anthropos*" meaning "*Man*" and "*Logos*" meaning "*Study*". This etymology of the term Anthropology leads us to an understanding that Anthropology is the study of man. Many anthropologists have tried to define anthropology in their own ways.

Kluckhohn, a famous American Anthropologist, has argued that, Anthropology is a science, which comes closest to being a "Total study of man". He compares anthropology to a mirror in which man, may look into his current and past - physical and cultural complexities, without any pre-conceived notions of man being civilized or primitive. Anthropology studies man and his contemporary society, his past, and also his sub-human and pre-human origins. It studies man of all cultures.

According to **Herskovits**, anthropology is the study of Man and his works. **M. Jacobs** and **B. J. Stern**, in their book "*General Anthropology*" have argued that "Anthropology is the scientific study of the physical, social and cultural development and behavior of human beings since their appearance on earth"

How do you situate Anthropology in Social Sciences?

Anthropology in its early period was regarded as a natural science. Its focus on evolutionary trends, primatology was sufficient enough to label it as a natural history. Comte regarded Anthropology as science of sciences. Man was held to be a part of nature and so his social life was automatically held to be automatically subject to laws of nature. On the other hand, some German idealists and many French humanists regarded man's life and nature as two separate things.

Bronislaw Malinowski's idea of anthropology is said to be on the borderline of natural science and humanities. On one hand, he gave importance to bio-psychic processes, human needs. He enunciated inexorable laws about human life. On the other hand, his functional theory is an application of instrumental philosophy of John Dewey and others to social science - explains how human culture is an instrument which satisfies the bio-psychic needs of man, thus making him a humanist.

Currently, there are two definite points of view by two classes of anthropologists.

(a) Natural Science

- Radcliffe Brown, Fortes, Nadel and others hold anthropology is a natural science and it studies human society.
- They believe that role of anthropology is not to study individual cultures but to do a comparative study of various human cultures, and arrive at common "social laws" - regarding emergence, growth, functioning and change of human societies.
- These laws are said to be regular aspect of human life, unaffected by time and space. They are repetitive, non-variant in nature. Anthropologist's role is to identify them and build a body of such laws.
- Tools developed in other natural sciences are applied to anthropology too.
- According to Fortes, separating natural and social life is like splitting the reality which is a unity into two artificial units.

(b) Branch of History

- Anthropologists like Kroeber, Bidney, Evans-Pritchard believe that unity of nature and culture is false unity.
- A human being is a naturally given thing, but social life although rooted in bio-psychic needs, does not remain tied down to organic-cum-psychic level. It emerges out to attain a new level - a super organic, super psychic: social level.
- A society is not a naturally given system, like solar system. It is a system of social relations, which are a product of history. They are held together by moral values and not natural forces.
- For example, Human nature no doubt decrees the need for social organization and group living but how such a group is organized and why, differs from society to society. Primitive - Modern, Rural - Urban, Communist - Capitalist, The variety in food, dressing, marriage and family types and multitude of rules dictating these aspects of life point out that society is something beyond natural and Thus it has to be classified amongst its sister disciplines.

Thus we have 2 distinct ways of approaching anthropology. While doing this we need to remember that, all the above discussions pertain to cultural anthropology. Physical anthropology is a pure-science and is closely associated with other sciences. Moreover while cultural anthropology also borrows tools used on other sciences apart from models drawn from history and aesthetics, for its studies, we can still consider that it is closer to humanities than to natural sciences. Redfield believes that future of anthropology must be characterized by a closer relationship to humanities because of common interests

2. Scope of Anthropology

Anthropology seeks answers to a variety of questions on evolution of man, early and immediate ancestors of human beings; understand pre-historic cultures, reasons for differences between contemporary human beings - [racial, physiological, anatomical differences], their culture, evolution of human culture and civilizations. Thus it aims to understand man in his totality.

Anthropology has a very broad scope, both Spatial and Temporal. In the spatial perspective, anthropology is concerned with all human beings and their cultures whether modern or primitive across the world. In the temporal perspective, anthropology is concerned with the entire human history, the cultural origin and development over times, civilizations of the past. It is also concerned with the evolution of homo-sapiens species over a period of 2 million years.

Anthropology concerns itself with holistic aspects of human beings. Anthropology in the form of biological anthropology concerns itself with human physiology, human anatomy, genetics etc. Socio-cultural anthropology concerns itself with cultures, languages and social structure of primitive and modern societies, evolution of culture in human society. Applied anthropology aims to apply the knowledge gained from anthropological studies for the development of human beings in various fields like forensics, sports, medical science, human development in socio-economic spheres.

Anthropology also aims at studying the linkage between various sciences like botany, zoology, archaeology, linguistics, economics, politics, religion and their relevance to humanity.

3. Development of Anthropology

Aristotle coined the term "*Anthropologist*". German idealist Kant, in 1789 wrote a book called "*Anthropology*" suggesting animal origin of man. The book entitled "*Anthropologie Abstracted*" defined anthropology as the history of human soul and human anatomy. Sydney Slotkin in his book '*Readings in early Anthropology*' traced the history of many anthropological sub-disciplines from seventeenth and eighteenth century. But he also agreed that the real professional interest of the subject did not appear until nineteenth century.

Europeans began exploration of the world in the 15-16th centuries. This led philosophers, explorers, travelers, businessmen and missionaries amongst them to come into contact with people from different cultures both modern and primitive. These people were fascinated by the huge variations in culture before them. They studied such societies with an intention of spreading christianity, gaining political control, expanding trade into these areas and so on. The documents produced by them, were studied back home, and developed curiosity in many armchair theorists. This was the beginning stage of anthropological studies in the socio-cultural arena.

Hodgkin in collaboration with several other distinguished persons, in 1839 inaugurated an '*Ethnological Society*' in Berlin. Similar societies were soon started in London and Newyork. Thus it could be said to be the beginning of institutional development related to anthropology.

In 1859, Charles Darwin's "*Origin of Species*" was published. It is with this work, evolutionary scientific studies started. The contributions of Herbert Spencer and Lamark towards understanding evolution was also significant. R.R. Marret, termed anthropology as 'child of Darwin'. This was a watershed movement which influenced both biological evolution as well as social evolution with

1. Palaeolithic Culture

1.1 Introduction

The term prehistory refers to the period when there was no written record. Understanding and reconstruction of the lifeways of ancient men during that period is based on the analysis of the material remains of their activities, such as tool making, animal hunting, food gathering etc., through archaeological explorations and excavations. The prehistoric period has been mainly divided into three ages, namely the Stone, Bronze and Iron ages based on the changes in technology and social and cultural developments.

The Stone Age is divided into three periods, namely Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic, based on technological developments and gradual evolution of culture. The people living during that period made tools and implements on stones which were easily available in the surroundings. Besides, they also used wood, bamboo, bones etc. for making tools. However, as these are perishable materials and disintegrate fast, we do not get much evidence of these tools in archaeological contexts.

The long period of human development, before the advent of agriculture and use of metal, is the epoch of Palaeolithic and Mesolithic cultures. The Palaeolithic is divided into Lower Palaeolithic, Middle Palaeolithic, and Upper Palaeolithic cultures. All these are hunting-gathering cultures. These cultures are distinguished by their respective tool types, the ensembles of which are called industries. The stone tools show progressive refinements in the techniques of tool manufacture and advancement in hunting methods from Lower Palaeolithic to Upper Palaeolithic.

The Indian landscape was endowed with all the prerequisites for a successful hunting-gathering way of life: suitable landforms permitting free movement of hunter-gatherer groups; occurrence of a variety of basic rocks and siliceous stones for making tools; existence of perennial water bodies in the form of a large and small streams and springs; and availability of a large variety of wild plant and animal foods. It is therefore not surprising that, barring the Himalayan tract proper and the Indo-Gangetic alluvial tracts, Stone Age groups occupied the whole of the Indian landmass. It is interesting that even the desertic zone of western Rajasthan was marked in the past with streams and pools and ponds which attracted Stone Age groups right from the Lower Palaeolithic till the Mesolithic stage.

1.2 LOWER PALAEOLITHIC STAGE IN INDIA

The Lower Palaeolithic phase in India consists of two principal tool-making or cultural traditions, viz., a) the Soanian tradition forming part of the East and Southeast Asian chopper chopping tool tradition and b) the Handaxe-cleaver or biface assemblages constituting the Acheulian tradition, which is widely known from the western half of the Old World (Africa, Western Europe, West and South Asia).

treated as representing an archaic form of *Homo sapiens*. Later a fossil clavicle was also reported from this site. Some bifacial implements and fossil fauna were also found from the gravel deposit.

1.2.4 Origins of Paleolithic Culture in India

Taking into account the high antiquity of hominin occupation in Africa and also the possible early dates for sites like Riwat and Uttarbaini in the Indian subcontinent, some workers have concluded that the Soanian type pebble-tool assemblages were a part of the spread of the Oldowan tradition of East Africa across Asia by a northern route between 1.8 and 2 million years ago. It has further been pointed out that the initial dispersal of the Acheulian into West Asia took place 1.4 million years ago and that its spread to South Asia occurred later either by a coastal route along the Arabian sea or else from the Levant (Mediterranean) zone of West Asia via a land route traversing the Iranian plateau. But there are some scholars who, based on the early dates for sites like Isampur, proposed an alternative hypothesis that the Acheulian culture may even have originated in peninsular India itself and spread in both eastern and western directions beyond the subcontinent's borders.

1.2.5 Settlement Patterns

1. In 2004, R. Korisettar put forward the view that the sedimentary rock formations of peninsular India, viz. the Vindhya-chal, Chhattisgarh, Cuddapah, Bhima and Kaladgi formations, were the core areas of Stone Age settlement. The principal reason put forward by him was that these areas offered many advantages to Stone Age groups, e. g. basin-shaped landforms, a variety of suitable rocks for toolmaking, presence of caves and rockshelters, perennial water springs, and rich biomass with a variety of wildlife and plant foods.
2. The team led by V. D. Mishra and J. N. Pal found 17 Acheulian sites on the slopes of hillocks and rock outcrops marking the fringe of Kaimur range and overlooking the Belan river. These are workshops where locally available rocks were used for tool-making. Their locations were suitable for the hominin groups to observe movement of game.
3. Pant and Jayaswal's Lower Palaeolithic Cultures work in the Paisra valley (15 km² in extent) of Bihar has revealed that a two-kilometer area around Paisra village served as the locus for camp-based activities. Many thin scatters of artefacts found in the surrounding uplands were interpreted as resource-procurement locations. The Paisra valley even today supports rich wildlife and a variety of plant foods.
4. In the 1990s, R. S. Pappu and Sushma Deo investigated the Stone Age land use patterns in the Kaladgi basin of North Karnataka. They arrived at the inference that the Stone Age groups generally avoided the thickly forested and high rainfall tracts close to the Western Ghats and instead concentrated their activities on river banks and in foothill zone of hills in the middle reaches of the rivers Malaprabha and Ghataprabha.

1.2.6 Lifestyle

The entire Palaeolithic stage was characterised by a simple economic organisation consisting of hunting of wild animals and gathering of wild plant foods. This interpretation is now supported by the recovery of dental and post-cranial bone pieces of wild cattle and deer species, dental remains of wild horse and tusk pieces of wild elephant from primary Acheulian sites at Isampur, Teggihalli, Hebbal Buzurg and Fatehpur in the Hunsgi and Baichbal valleys, Chirki-Nevasa in Maharashtra, Attirampakkam in Tamil Nadu and other sites. Cut-marks and other taphonomic marks found on these bones indicate that these pieces formed part of food-processing and consumption. Further, the occurrence of turtle shell pieces at sites like Isampur suggests that the Stone Age groups also exploited a variety of small fauna comprising insects, birds, fishes, rodents and amphibians by adopting simple collection strategies.

Now there is a worldwide realisation that plant foods also played an important role in the diet of Stone Age groups. M. D. Kajale recovered remains of wild bread fruit and two species of banana from Mesolithic levels (10,000 to 8,000 B. C.) of the cave site of Bell-jena Kitulgala in Sri Lanka. Also ethnoarchaeological studies conducted by M. L. K. Murty and D. R. Raju in the Eastern Ghats of