BANC-133

Fundamentals of Social and Cultural Anthropology

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Indira Gandhi National Open University

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COURSE PREPARATION TEAM

Block 1	**Nature And Scope**	
UNIT 1	Social and Cultural Anthropology: Meaning, Scope and Relevance	Prof. Subhadra Mitra Channa, Former Professor, Department of Anthropology University of Delhi
UNIT 2	History and Development of Social and Cultural Anthropology	Prof. Subhadra Mitra Channa, Former Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Delhi
UNIT 3	Relationship of Social and Cultural Anthropology: Other Branches of Anthropology and Other Disciplines	Dr. Keya Pandey, Department of Anthropology, University of Lucknow, Lucknow **Unit 3 Edited by:** Professor Vinay Kumar Srivastava, Former Professor and Head, Department of Anthropology, University of Delhi. Currently Director, Anthropological Survey of India.
Block 2	**Basic Concepts**	
UNIT 4	Society	Prof. Vinay Kumar Srivastava, Former Head and Professor. Department of Anthropology, Delhi, Currently Director, Anthropological Survey of India.
UNIT 5	Culture	Dr. Rukshana Zaman, Faculty of Anthropology, SOSS, IGNOU
UNIT 6	Institutions I: Kinship, Family and Marriage	Dr. Rukshana Zaman, Faculty of Anthropology, SOSS, IGNOU
UNIT 7	Institutions II: Economic, Political and Religious	**Unit 5 and 6 Edited by:** Prof. Subhadra Mitra Channa, Former Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Delhi.
UNIT 8	Gender and Culture	Dr. Ratheesh Kumar, Assistant Professor, Centre for the Study of Social Systems, School of Social Systems, Jawaharlal Nehru University.
Block 3	**Theoretical Perspectives**	
UNIT 9	Classical Theories	Prof. Subhadra Mitra Channa, Former Professor, Department of Anthropology University of Delhi
UNIT 10	Theories of Structure and Function	Prof. Vinay Kumar Srivastava, Former Head and Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Delhi, Currently Director, Anthropological Survey of India.
UNIT 11	Contemporary Theories	Prof. Subhadra Mitra Channa, Former Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Delhi.
Block 4	**Fieldwork**	
UNIT 12	Fieldwork Traditions in Anthropology	Prof. Vinay Kumar Srivastava, Former Professor and Head, Department of Anthropology, University of Delhi, Currently Director, Anthropological Survey of India.
UNIT 13	Doing Fieldwork	Dr. Rukshana Zaman, Faculty of Anthropology, SOSS, IGNOU
UNIT 14	Methods and Techniques	Prof. Vinay Kumar Srivastava and Dr. Rukshana Zaman **Unit 12 and 13 Edited by:** Prof. Subhadra Mitra Channa, Former Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Delhi.

Except for Unit 8, all other units adopted from Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Anthropology Programme, Course: Introduction to Social and Cultural Anthropology. Course Code: BANC 102.

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Course Contents

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BANC 133 FUNDAMENTAL OF SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Course Introduction

Social and cultural anthropology under its rubric encompasses the study of society and culture. The foremost contribution of the subject has been in the understanding of the various societies and cultures across the globe both objectively and subjectively, doing away with biases and prejudices, while presenting their relative importance. The main objective of the course is for the learners to understand in a holistic manner the social institutions and the cultural attributes that constructs human societies.

Learning Outcome

After reading the course the learner should be able to:

i) explain the origin, historical background and foundation of social and cultural anthropology;

ii) identify the various institutions in a society and relate to the cultural aspects present in societies;

iii) discuss the theories and approaches in social and cultural anthropology; and

iv) describe how fieldwork is to be conducted in the field of social and cultural anthropology.

Course Presentation

The course has been divided into four blocks. Each block has thematically arranged units. In total there are fourteen units. Now let us see what we have discussed in each block.

Block 1: The first block will acquaint the learners with the basic understanding of the foundation of social and cultural anthropology along with its emergence as a scientific discipline. This block deals with the early developments that led to the beginning of the discipline of social and cultural anthropology. Herein, the development of the subject in Britain and America has been dealt that presents the question of why the British anthropologists laid emphasis on society and the American anthropologists on culture. The growth and development of social and cultural anthropology in India is also reflected upon. The learners would also gain insight as to how the subject is different yet have similarities with some of the other disciplines like sociology, psychology, history, political science etc.

Block 2: The second block deals with the study of the forms and processes in the conceptualisation of society and culture. This block takes into account the social institutions that are the pillars of the society. Social groups; concepts of kinship, marriage and family; religious ideas and ritual practices; the production, consumption and exchange of necessities. The learners while reading this block would be able to comprehend how culture is entwined with the institutions forming an integral part of society. Institutions are universal in societies however, it is cultural variations that bring forth diversity. The unit on gender and culture focuses on the concept of gender and how enculturation and socialisation leads to gender construction.

Block 3: The third block presents the theories and approaches, some defunct some still in practice, that make up the study of human society and culture. From this block the learners would gain insight as to how the theories have changed with the perspectives that the anthropologists looked at societies. In the initail stages of the subject the focus was on how evolution had taken place, then moved on to diffusion, after which the trend was to understand the functions and the structures within a society. In the twenty first century now the focus has shifted to modern and post modern phases and the inclusion of the female voice in anthropological writings.

Block 4: In the last block, the learner would be introduced to field traditions and fieldwork, the hallmark of anthropology. The nuances of how to conduct a fieldwork, the tools and techniques that are to be used during data collection in the field, compiling and analysing the data after returning from the field to writing and presentation of the dissertation, thesis or project report has been discussed in depth. This block would prepare the learner to take up anthropological fieldwork.

All the best, happy reading and wish you success. Hope the course material act as a guide for you to achieve your goals.

BLOCK 1
NATURE AND SCOPE

UNIT 1 SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY: MEANING, SCOPE AND RELEVANCE

Contents

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit the learners would be able to:

- explain the concept of social and cultural anthropology;
- comprehend the reasons for distinguishing between social and cultural anthropology, the context in which it developed;
- figure out the application or scope of having learnt social and cultural anthropology; and
- grasp as to why it is important to be trained in social and cultural anthropology.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In order to know about social and cultural anthropology, the learner must first learn about what society is and what culture is? How are they related and how are they different? Most of us go through life taking these entities as given, we never reflect on the fact that society and culture are not like the natural environment, they are not given and they are not created by any divine intervention, although for a long time, people did believe that society was a creation of God and that culture was something that was divinely ordained. Let us take for example the matter of food, or what we eat. Many people, in fact a majority of people across the globe eat what they *consider* food, in other words not merely something edible or something that a human body can digest, but something that they believe *should* be eaten, and similarly there are foods that cannot be eaten, again not because they are not food in the biological sense of the word, and there are people who do eat what some other people consider non- food. Even more than that, for many people some things are forbidden by religion or as they believe by their God; so that eating of forbidden foods may actually be a sin.

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But if we reflect upon all these taboos and examine them from an intellectual point of view, it becomes clear that these are forbidden not by God but by culture, and these cultural taboos are often a product of history, of circumstances and may have their hidden rationality (Harris 1985). Again, reflecting upon what is society and what is culture, we come to the conclusion that these are human creations, may be not conscious, but certainly by the operation of reasoning that evolves over historical time and is situated within social, economic and political contexts. Neither society, nor culture is static. They evolve and transform over time. What may have been considered wrong at one point of time becomes right at another point of time. In this unit we would examine these concepts in somewhat greater details.

1.1 SOCIETY AND CULTURE

A human child is born into a pre-existing set of social relationships. As soon as a child is born, it has some relatives, that includes its parents, its siblings, its grandparents and so on. These relatives in turn are part of a larger set of relationships we call a kinship network that may be part of an even larger group like a clan, or a caste, and finally the set of relationships is closed and we have a society that has an identity like a specific tribe, an ethnic group or a country, nation or linguistic community. The sense of belonging to a group is called as social identity. This identity can have several layers. Thus if one is an Indian, we can say that we belong to Indian society. Within Indian society, we can say we belong to a religious community, like being a Hindu or a Christian or we can be belonging to a tribe or to a caste group.

At each level, we can say that society is a network of relationships and belonging to a particular set of relationships gives us an identity. Some identities are the ones that we are born with, these are known as ascribed and some we pick up later in life and these are known as acquired. The identities that we are born with also make us into a particular type of person. Like speaking a particular language or even languages, eating a kind of food, following a particular way of life and worshipping particular deities and believing in certain things as if they were the truth. This last aspect is known as a world-view. Each one of us has a particular cognition about the world we live in, and have prescribed ways to deal with our life situations.

We are thus born into a set of relationships we call society and by virtue of being born in a specific time and place we acquire certain ways of doing and thinking that we call as culture. A culture is a way of life, a pattern of doing things, and a set of meanings that we impose upon the world around us. It is through culture that everything around us becomes meaningful. It is culture that also makes human beings different from each other for culture is an acquired and not a genetic trait.

As humans we are one species and as a species we have common traits. One of these human traits is the capacity for symbolic behaviour or the capacity for abstract thinking. Human beings can imagine, they can attribute meanings to objects that is not an inherent property of that object. Thus sounds for humans can become organised into language where sounds take on meanings that are arbitrarily assigned to them. This is the reason why there are so many, in fact numerous human languages, each different from the other. We can call for example a frog in so many different ways and this is possible because none of these sounds that mean a frog in different languages are in any way connected with the frog as an object. In other words all labels and names (sounds) are arbitrary. This is the reason why humans as one species show the largest variety in what they eat, do or the way in which they live.

We do not live by our genetics or our instincts but by a self- acquired mechanism called culture (Kaplan and Manners 1972).

But to have culture one must be a part of a society for as already indicated culture is not an inherent trait, it is acquired. So how does a human acquire culture, it is by being born in and being brought up in a society. We learn to live in society in a way that society can reproduce itself. We learn to behave according to rules that we call as social norms. These social norms and rules are acquired by transmission through processes we call as socialisation or the way in which a human child is brought up by its adult care givers. We also acquire or learn the ways of life and the meanings that provide the blue print for behaviour, like what to eat and how to eat, what to wear and how to wear, how to behave like a proper member of the society and how not to live so as to not become a social drop out. These ways of moving, speaking, the knowledge of collective meanings is called as culture and the process of acquiring culture is called as enculturation.

These two processes go hand in hand. We learn there is something called a parent child relationship, this is socialisation and we learn the appropriate behaviour that goes with this relationship and this is called enculturation.

Check Your Progress 1

1. What is social identity?

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2. Explain the meaning of world- view.

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3. What do you understand by ascribed and achieved status?

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4. Is culture a genetically inherited trait?

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5. What is socialisation and enculturation?

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6. How is culture transmitted from one generation to the next?

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1.2 SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Social anthropology deals primarily with the study of social relationships and the study of what we call as social institutions like family, kinship, political institutions and economic institutions. They study norms and rules of behaviour and the structures that constitute society.

Cultural anthropologists study symbols and meaning systems, they study values and beliefs and what are the underlying principles that guide action. Although related, the two branches emphasise different aspects and approach their subject matter differently. For example, if one is studying political institutions from a social perspective, then one will study the institutional structure of the political system, like if it is a Panchayat, then the structure of personnel, their rights and duties, the hierarchy and norms and principles of interaction etc. If one is studying the political arena from a cultural perspective then, one will not focus on the structural aspects but will focus on the negotiations of power, the strategies and the tactics by which power is used and manipulated. From a cultural perspective one may focus not on the positions themselves but the processes by which these are obtained. The cultural anthropologists would focus on the symbols by which power is manifested and the subtle use of meanings in expressing and maintaining power.

Historically the social anthropological perspective was developed in Britain and the European continent, following the French School of Mauss, Hubert and Durkheim. The doyens of the social anthropological perspective were scholars like A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, E.E. Evans-Pritchard, Bronislaw Malinowski, Raymond Firth and others of the British school and they influenced Indian anthropologists like M.N. Srinivas and others. Structures of hierarchy, co-operation and association, formal rules of behaviour and norms of interaction forms the focus of social anthropological analysis.

Cultural anthropology developed in the U.S.A. for historical reasons. The founding father of cultural anthropology in America was Franz Boas. He was followed by his students, such as Alfred Kroeber, Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict, Ruth Bunzel and other distinguished scholars like Darryl Forde, Melville Herskovits, Ralph Linton and others. It deals more with the super-organic (cultural) aspects than with actual existing social relationships as most of the indigenous people of America were dispersed or eliminated in the process of colonisation. Culture also examines the historical and environmental aspects as culture is supposed by definition to be historically derived and environmentally contextualised. Thus in a cultural approach we will examine how cultural traits develop, diffuse, adapt to the surroundings and how they form part of a larger system of meanings.

While cultural aspects like meanings and values are also discussed in a social relational approach, they are subverted to the primary focus on structures. Similarly in a cultural approach the structures form only a background against which meanings and symbols are contextualised.

Check Your Progress 2

7. What do social anthropologists focus on when they study communities?

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8. What aspects of society do cultural anthropologists emphasise on?

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9. Name some of the early scholars who worked in the field of social anthropology from Britain and Europe.

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10. Name some of the early scholars who worked in the field of cultural anthropology from U.S.A.

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1.3 SCOPE OF SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

You must be wondering, as you learn this subject, as to what is the scope of being a social or a cultural anthropologist? What are the areas of knowledge that this subject touches upon? You will be happy to know that social/cultural anthropology has one of the widest scope as compared to any other subject, for it deals directly with the human situation. If we study ourselves as *human beings*, this is the subject that we rely upon. In anthropology, humans are treated as a totality and not simply as a body (medical science) or a mind (psychology) or as an animal species (zoology). Of course there are subjects like history and geography that come close to cultural anthropology, but they too do not deal with all aspects of being human. Thus as a cultural anthropologist, you will study history but it need not only be the written or documented history that historians usually rely upon, but it will include what we call as oral history and ethno-history. Anthropologists take people as their primary subject of study, for them it is more important to know the people's version of history for it is this version that motivates and triggers action. People act according to their beliefs and ethno-history or the people's version of their history is what is going to predict how people will behave. Anthropologists are not concerned with what is documented and followed by the academic community but what is believed in and followed by the common people at large. It is the latter version that determines the course of history and shapes collective human action.

It must be noted that anthropology does not focus on the individual like the psychologists, they are only interested in the collective and the public domain. Both society and culture are in the realm of the total society and although shared, do not refer to individual characters or propensities. The relation of individuals to society, in the sense that how the individual is shaped by society, and how the individuals through their actions and behaviour reproduce society is a matter of concern for anthropologists. For example humans do not mate, they marry, in other words, who they choose as their partner is largely determined by their cultural conditioning, even when one assumes that there is a free choice. For example in the American society, marriage is supposed to be determined by free individual choice but actual study of marriages indicate that majority of marriages rarely take place across the racial and even the class divide. But at the same time, as society is changing, the values with respect to inter-racial marriage is also changing, thus social and cultural changes often accompany each other. In the U.S.A. for example, the election of a black president, the changes in perception due to urbanisation and education and the generally liberal attitudes of some parts of the U.S.A. has led to a sea change in patterns of marriage (Bialik 2017). Data from the few research centers indicates that there has been a more than five- fold increase from 3% in 1967 to 17% among all newlyweds towards inter-racial marriage pattern in 2015. Among all married people in 2015, 10% show inter-racial marriage. Of course the occurrence of 10% marriage shows that for a long time, people in U.S.A. did not marry across the race divide that is only picking up in recent times. Yet the very figures indicate that cultural prejudices do come in the way of a society being truly open, even when it is ideologically so. Anthropologists are by training immensely suited to investigate the occurrence of such inhibitions in an open society, where there exist no legal or social barriers to inter-marriage. The facts also indicate that change is occurring. Anthropologists would engage in studying both the initial existence of the prejudices and also analysing the deeper causes of changes, when they occur.

Cultural anthropologists would look for the changing meanings of marriage, the changing colour symbols and changes in values and ideology. The social anthropologists would look for structural changes, the changing economic and power equations and transforming hierarchies. The election of a black president in the US indicates both changes in social hierarchies and power structures as well it indicates cultural transformations of values. This is not to say that there is such a division of labour between social and cultural anthropologists as most scholars would look for all these factors. Thus we prefer to use the combined term social/cultural anthropology in recent times than emphasise upon one or the other.

Social anthropology focuses generally upon aspects of society such as social stratification, studies of social institutions such as those pertaining to economy, politics, religion and law. A major aspect of social anthropological studies is that pertaining to kinship, family and marriage. The classical works of these kinds were the books: *African Systems of Kinship and Marriage*, *African Political Systems*, *Witchcraft among the Azande*, *The Nuers*, *Nuer Religion* and so on. Social anthropologists also studied change and various types of social transformations. With the incorporation of Marxism into anthropology, the aspect of history was also covered in anthropological analysis.

Cultural anthropologists were able to venture into many more directions, the American school gave rise to ecological anthropology, psychological anthropology, medical anthropology, linguistic anthropology, historical anthropology and now we have many more branches of anthropology, like enterprise anthropology, anthropology of women, anthropology of tourism, anthropology of disaster and risk management and any

other number of fields into which anthropologists now venture. In every case the anthropologists try to bring their methodology of qualitative, in-depth analysis and data collection into each of these aspects of human existence. Where we compete with already existing disciplines like psychology and history, the anthropologists justify their existence by their method.

Psychological anthropologists differ from psychologists in that while psychologists believe that the human brain and mind are similar in all human beings and that classical psychological studies treated all human minds as alike, psychological anthropology investigates the relationship between the individual mind and culture (Bourguignon 1979). According to the founders of the culture and personality school, that led to the formation of psychological anthropology as a sub-discipline of social/cultural anthropology, if we accept Freud's theory of early childhood experiences affecting adult personality, then since different cultures practice different child rearing practices, there is going to be a collective cultural influence on all children brought up in the same culture, that will give rise to some collective personality traits in persons subjected to the similar process of enculturation. For example practices such as feeding, weaning, toilet training and sleep patterns of infants are largely conditioned by cultural norms. For example in South Asia, most children sleep with their mothers and are carried in the lap or back of parents and adult care givers. In American society on the other hand, even infants are put in a separate room and bed and are carried in strollers and almost never in the lap. These fundamental differences in the handling of the child are likely to produce differences in adult personality. Contemporary psychologists too have begun to incorporate the concept of cross-cultural personality traits in their work (see Schwartz, White and Lutz 1992).

Reflection

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) proposed the *psychoanalytic theory* (psyche = the mind and analysis = looking at the parts of the mind individually to see how they relate). It is the first theory that describes the stages of development through childhood. The basic premise of the theory is that the biological urges move an individual through a series of stages that is responsible for shaping one's personality.

Freud had given his theory of early childhood personality development based on what he considered universal human traits largely biologically determined. According to Freud three stages are involved particularly, oral, anal and oedipal and get resolved by cultural means such as weaning, toilet training and cultural interpretation of parenthood.

Eminent social anthropologists John Beattie has written that "Social anthropologists in fact concern themselves with three different levels of data; (i) 'what actually happens', (ii) 'what people think happens' and (iii) what they think ought to happen, their legal and moral values" (Beattie c.f. Moore and Sanders 2006: 149). Thus the first is often established by statistical analysis like the example of inter-racial marriage that we have already talked about. Anthropologists will not be satisfied by such mere statement of data. They now go into the details of social interaction between the different 'races', their norms and values of interaction, even their history and context. They would as cultural anthropologists examine the symbolic significance of race and the moral aspects. A lot about these interactions would depend on how people interpret and understand the institution of marriage. Thus anthropologists engage in multi-faceted analysis taking various dimensions of a phenomenon into account.

Check Your Progress 3

11. State the subject matter of Social Anthropology.

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12. State the subject matter of Cultural Anthropology.

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1.4 THE RELEVANCE OF SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

It is also accepted in anthropological theory that the real social conditions do not show up on the surface but are at deeper layers below the visible reality, and to look for the real reasons, one may have to go deeper. This is the reason that anthropological methods require long term and engaged study of a particular situation or 'field'. This in-depth study is mostly qualitative in nature where one engages with real human beings rather than just rely on secondary data or statistics. This is where anthropologists differ significantly from economists, as to them concepts like poverty are not just statistical figures but relate to real people, their lives and their real life conditions. Anthropologists tend to put a face on the facts that they present.

The ethnographic method, as the anthropological method of doing a holistic study of a specific area, is called, often uses as data, personal narratives, life histories and face to face interviews with real people. It also involves the anthropologist going and staying for long periods of time with the people who are being studied and whose lives are then shared by them. This is known in anthropological language as 'going native'. Thus anthropological fieldwork involves the subjective interaction of the anthropologist with the field that can no longer be viewed as an object. The subjectivities of the informants and that of the anthropologist form an interaction where the subjective self of the anthropologist cannot be ignored. In other words the anthropologist is not the passive, objective, scientific observer of the laboratory situation; he or she is a living human being in contact with other human beings and thus his or her emotions and sentiments remain alive. The fieldwork situation is an interaction of one human being with others and therefore there is a cognitive and perceptual element from both sides. The very presence of the anthropologist transforms the field as others begin to interact with the scholar, who becomes situated in the field, as a part of it (Clifford and Marcus 1990). This very subjectivity, the lack of so-called scientific objectivity is the hall mark of the anthropological method.

Such close interactions with the human beings often bring out data that would never be accessible by any superficial or short term methods. The scope of anthropology thus extends to every dimension of human life but in a way that these areas are accessed with humane concern and empathy. The anthropologists thus find themselves as advocates for the people they study, representing them and fighting for them at various forums. The anthropologists' immersion in the field, give them an empathetic

relationship with them, so that they often end up thinking like them. Thus the scholar also becomes an activist or he or she applies the knowledge that they have gained for the good of the people who they begin to identify as their own. Most anthropologists refer to their informants as 'my people'; often forming a lifelong relationship with them.

The most important contribution of anthropology as a discipline is to learn to move beyond what is known as 'ethno-centrism'. Since all human beings are enculturated into a particular way of life, it is also very common for people to get into the mind-set that their way of life is the best way. Even if people are not consciously thinking in these terms we get used to accepting some things as 'normal' and it is very difficult for us to move beyond this comfort zone of what we consider the appropriate way of living. Many kinds of cultural practices and habits appear 'disgusting', 'shocking' or strange to some people while they may be perfectly acceptable and 'normal' for those who practice them. Thus eating dogs, men wearing skirts, women shaving their heads, marriages of infants, female infanticide etc. are practices that may shock or produce disgust in those who may not be used to them.

Anthropologists on the other hand are trained to stretch their power of acceptance to stretched limits where, even if they may not bring themselves to practice these customs, can at least try to justify them for people who do, for example read Felix Padel's (2011) work on human sacrifice among the Kondh tribes of Orissa, where even if not exactly supporting the custom, he shows how the practice itself was distorted and blown out of proportion by the British administrators who used this data to project the Kondhs as 'primitive' and barbaric. He also demonstrates through the use of archival and field data, how the British intervention in this matter and their ruthless persecution of the tribals was far more savage and caused far more human misery than was ever caused by the actual practice of human sacrifice.

Thus a primary work of anthropologists is to investigate the real data, to go beyond stereotypes and prejudices to analyse with an open mind. To the anthropologists, there are societies and there are cultures. They are also now strongly committed to the value of not judging any cultural or social practice and to only understand things in their own context. This moving beyond ethnocentrism towards a universal humanism is now the hallmark of being an anthropologist. As students of anthropology you must also learn to be non-judgmental, to appreciate diversity and to understand that humans live according to their culture and cultures are not genetic, but acquired as members of divergent societies. It is a human trait that we are diverse in our ways of life and the relevance of anthropology which is a human as well as a humane science is to understand this diversity and learn to respect it. Anthropologists are extremely respectful of the ways of other people and they are also making all efforts to extend this appreciation to others, so that more and more people are able to understand the relevance and need of cultural diversity and tolerance for ways not their own.

Check Your Progress 4

13. Describe the term 'going native'.

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14. What is subjectivity?

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15. Suggest any two relevance of studying anthropology.

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1.5 SUMMARY

In this unit you have learnt the basics about the discipline of social and cultural anthropology. The student had been told the difference as well as the integral relationship between society and culture and how both of these are a hall mark of our existence as humans on this earth. Without culture there are no humans and without society there can be no culture as it is behaviour, values and practices that we learn only as members of society and society cannot be reproduced as a set of enduring relationships if people did not behave according to the cultural norms. Thus social groups such as caste, tribe and ethnic groups reproduce themselves through the institutions of marriage. But people are culturally conditioned to marry in a way that they reproduce their societies.

We have learnt how anthropology as a discipline has got a wide scope as anthropological methods and methodology, is capable of understanding almost any phenomenon pertaining to human society and human behaviour. Thus religion, politics, philosophy, psychology and economics are all within the purview of anthropology, except that anthropology approaches these dimensions of society in a manner quite different from those adopted classically in the disciplines of say, psychology, economics and political science. Today many of them including historians are adopting what we understand as the ethnographic method. Fieldwork or the gathering of data from people directly is something that psychologists, cultural geographers and historians are also doing. Social and cultural anthropologists have the unique ability to communicate across cultures and this does not just mean speaking the same language but it means that they are able to break down the cognitive barrier that usually exists between persons of different cultures or even class and community background. In the next unit we will explore the history and development of social and cultural anthropology.

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1.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. refer to section 1.1.
2. refer to section 1.1.
3. refer to section 1.1.
4. No.
5. refer to para 6 of section 1.1.
6. refer to section 1.1.
7. refer to section 1.2.
8. refer to section 1.2.
9. A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, E.E. Evans-Pritchard, Bronislaw Malinowski, Raymond Firth and others.
10. Franz Boas, Alfred Kroeber, Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict, Ruth Bunzel, Darryl Forde, Melville Herskovits, Ralph Linton and others.
11. refer to section 1.3 paragraph four.

12. refer to section 1.3 paragraph five.
13. refer to section 1.4 paragraph two.
14. refer to section 1.4.
15. refer to section 1.4.

UNIT 2 HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Contents

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this unit the learners will be able to discuss the:

- genesis of the subject of social and cultural anthropology;
- historical time frame for their development including the political and economic context;
- historical roots of the differentiation of the two branches in the colonial period; and
- history of development of anthropology in India.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

Anthropology, defined as the study of (Hu)Man is paradoxically among the most recent of all disciplines that was considered worthy of study. The reason was also simple, that human communities across the world took their society and ways of life as given, as a taken for granted truth for which no questions were asked. Questions and doubts, that some people naturally have, were answered through existing cosmologies and religious doctrines. In this unit you will learn about the fascinating story of how and why after many centuries of learning to read and write and after developing the astronomical, mathematical, biological and all other sciences, humans finally turned the inquisitive gaze upon themselves.

2.1 WHY ANTHROPOLOGY?

Around the 16th century, Europe underwent a paradigm shift in philosophical thinking as it expanded its geopolitical boundaries across the world in terms of travel and

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trade. There was growing disillusionment with the Church and its dictums. The French Revolution as well as the American Revolution brought about the realisation that the social order was not based on divine origins but was an entity that could be shaken at its roots by human action and agency. The exposure to the rest of the globe also made the Europeans realise that societies and people could be found in varieties of forms and shapes, not only in terms of physical differences but also in terms of customs, ways of life and thinking. Even before Darwin and Wallace had formulated the theories of biological evolution, the French thinkers and the Scottish Enlightenment philosophers were formulating their hypotheses of human social evolution and the possibility of society being a human rather than a divine creation. The exposure to other cultures triggered ideas of social evolution as the European thinkers tried to explain the diversity of cultures by connecting them with their own past. Auguste Comte gave his theory of a stage by stage evolution of human societies that set the stage for further speculative thinking on these lines. Comte's thesis that human societies evolved through the ages of Theology, Metaphysics and Reason, put Europeans at the top of the evolutionary scale. When Europeans looked at other people, they thought they were looking down as well as looking back (see Aaron 1965).

While Comte concentrated on the reflective faculties of humans and their capacity for rational thought; another major contributor to theory of social evolution was Herbert Spencer, who was also a contemporary of Charles Darwin and their theories of social and biological evolutions overlapped to some extent. Spencer's rather controversial theory that societies behave like natural systems where all those parts (people) that are weak or lack survival potential get eliminated was established as the popular conception of 'survival of the fittest' that also got mistakenly grafted to Darwin's theory of evolution. Spencer's theory was also used by the emerging industrial capitalism of Europe to justify both the spread of colonial rule and the onus that capitalism put on the individual entrepreneur. Both Comte and Spencer along with other European scholars were representing what is known as the Positivist approach to the study of social phenomenon.

> ***Reflection***
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> The Positivist approach advocated that societies were capable of being studied and analysed as objects like any other object of scientific investigation. In other words the scholar of society was also a scientist who could apply his analytical skills to objectively scrutinise society with the same degree of objective detachment and methodological rigour that a scientist brings to his examinations. Societies were compared to organisms and like organisms they were subjects of evolution and predictable laws.

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

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

Check Your Progress 1

1. Name some of the early thinkers who talked about evolution of human beings and societies.

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2. Who postulated the concept of 'survival of the fittest' in terms of social evolution?

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3. Give two reasons why anthropology is known as the 'Science of (Hu)Man'.

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2.2 THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

No theory arises in a vacuum. It is well known that Galileo and Copernicus were ahead of their times and suffered the consequences and Darwin came at the right time to put forward a theory that completely shook what was written in the Bible about Genesis, but was accepted with enthusiasm. The time of development of anthropology was at the peak of the colonising process of Europe over the rest of the world. The relatively equal relationship established through trade was being turned into one of political domination and gross exploitation. Trautmann (1997) has described how the British treated Indians with respect and almost awe as long as they were trading, but as soon as the rule of queen Victoria was established Indians and their culture was denigrated to the level of savagery and all native customs were disparagingly dismissed as 'uncivilised'. The rising needs of capitalist economy were pushing Europe to a relentless search for resources to feed its growing industries both in terms of raw materials as well for markets for selling their goods. However at the same time the Enlightenment period was the time of flowering of ideas of

Equality, Humanism and Liberty; thoughts that originated from the French and American revolutions. There was the strong belief in the Europeans as being 'civilised' and carriers of human values of justice and democracy. There was an obvious contradiction between this faith and the genocidal activities that accompanied colonisation.

It was the evolutionary theories that justified and supported the spread of European rule by creating the image of the 'primitive other'. As put forward by an array of scholars from Comte, Bachofen, Maine, McLennan and others; human societies had gone through several stages that were also linearly progressive. The peak of evolution was reached by the Western societies; whose dominance was further justified by Spencer's dictum of 'survival of the fittest'. Thus the Europeans were succeeding because they were more 'fit' and also the people they were colonising were the 'primitives' who were compared to immature children by Freud and were considered at lower stages of mental evolution by Darwin and as regressed in stages that had not quite reached the patriarchal, male dominated civilisation of the West. Scholars such as Bachofen and McLennan for instance considered female domination as a sign of 'backwardness' putting matriliny/matriarchy as a lower stage of human evolution. This was in compliance with the view of the nature /culture, women/men dichotomy already established (Ortner 1974). Since western societies were strongly patriarchal in both religion and law, they were superior. They were also self-professed examples of superior civilisation that justified their taking over and 'civilising' the primitives.

Check Your Progress 2

4. 'The growth of anthropology was at its peak during the colonisation process of Europe over the rest of the world.' State whether the following statement is True or False.

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5. During the Enlightenment period state the ideas that flowered owing to the French and American revolutions.

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2.3 ANTHROPOLOGY AS A DISCIPLINE

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

explain the observed differences of physical types and of social and cultural life. The biological evolution needed to look beyond the time when humans became humans so biological evolution was rooted in paleoanthropology or the study of fossil remains of humans and pre human hominids and also primatology or study of behaviour and physiology of higher primates. Social evolution on the other hand not only examined pre-historical remains and archaeological roots but also considered existing human societies as remains of the past of the most evolved societies namely the western European.

It was this last assumption that formed the basis of the theory of social evolution where Tylor assumed that spatial differences could be translated into temporal differences. While this theory put some people on the lower rungs of the evolutionary ladder, it also based itself on what was then recognised as the theory of 'psychic unity of mankind'. Since humans were one species, it was believed their mental functioning would necessarily be the same. All humans were supposed to have one Culture, what Ingold (1986) has called culture with a capital C. The observed differences were then explained by saying that the different peoples had evolved to different levels of culture, with the added proposition that all would ultimately attain the same level of culture as had already been attained by western civilisation. Anthropology was at times criticised for being a colonial discipline especially as the theory of social evolution was both Eurocentric and directly or indirectly supported colonisation by its definition of 'civilisation' as synonymous with the West.

Reflection

Ethnocentrism refers to the feeling of considering one's own culture as being superior as well as the 'normal' way of doing things. Eurocentric perspective refers to the Europeans considering their own society and culture as being at the height of social evolution and most civilised.

Anthropology diversified into four main branches, namely physical or biological anthropology that dealt with human biological diversity; linguistics that dealt with relationship between culture and language, archaeology that delved into the past of human society and social/cultural anthropology. However these branches are not totally exclusive of each other and the fact of humans evolving as cultured beings, who live in society, underlies all aspects of anthropology. The initial Eurocentric bias of anthropology was later replaced by a far more relativistic and humanistic approach. The historical transformations of the world had much to do with changes in anthropological paradigms.

Check Your Progress 3

6. Who assumed the first chair of anthropology in Oxford University?

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7. Name the four major branches of anthropology.

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2.4 THE BRITISH AND THE AMERICAN SCHOOLS OF ANTHROPOLOGY

The intrinsic relationship of anthropology with colonisation is explicit in the further development of the discipline in its British version and the development of what came to be known as the American Cultural Tradition. The academic roots of British structural –functional school was drawn from the functionalism of Durkheim (1950) who belonged to the French school of sociology. The structural-functional school critiqued the classical evolutionists for their speculative theories. Moving away from the deductive theories of evolution they moved to empiricism and developed the field study method that has today become the hall mark of anthropology.

The structural-functional school believed that each society has a structure in the form of social relationships and there is a functional logic of each part of this structure that contributes to the whole. The basic premises of structural functionalism was based on the axiom of cultural relativism, that cultures were not higher and lower manifestation of stages of the same culture, but cultures in plural were each functional wholes. Each society was bound and could be compared to a living organism whose parts contribute to the functioning of the entire body. Thus one could not study parts of cultures, like religion and kinship by using the comparative method, as was done in classical evolutionary theory, but a society needed to be studied in its entirety and in depth, and the functional relationship between its parts established by close and intimate interaction with the people concerned. The British anthropologists mainly responsible for this approach used it to study those societies under the rule of the Crown that needed to be governed to be in stable equilibrium. To some extent the desire of the administrators was reflected in the academic presumptions.

> ***Reflection***
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> Cultural Relativism refers to the theoretical position where aspects of any culture are seen as relevant, that is functional in their own context and not comparable to other cultures. This was a criticism of evolutionary theory and foundation of functional theory.

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

The functional studies were carried out by the British and French anthropologists in most of the colonies and they were often engaged by the colonial governments to help the administration by providing information about the people so that they could be better governed and managed. Often as in India, many administrators became anthropologists of sorts when they carried out fieldwork among the people they were required to govern. But the works of these administrators/ethnographers were not free from bias (Channa 1992). However, although anthropologists were often initially in the pay of the state, and were required to support the state agenda of colonisation; as a result of long stay and intimate contact with the people they were sent to study, they often turned up against the policies of the state. Sometimes their influence changed the policies of the government, like for example the influence of anthropologist Verrier Elwin were seen on the policies made by Nehru's government

regarding the manner in which the people of North-East of India were to be governed. Anthropologists often advocated for retention of local customs and were against undue interference in the lives of the native. The anthropologists working in India and Africa were mostly part of governments that worked from, 'outside'. India and large parts of Africa were external colonies of the British, French and Dutch governments, that retained to a large extent their native societies and cultures; similar conditions existed in Indonesia, Burma and other colonies not totally taken over by the white populations.

In America, the situation was quite different. Here the Native Americans had not only been dispersed and their societies destroyed; many tribes and communities had been depleted to almost the last survivors, when the anthropologists began to study them. The father of American anthropology, Franz Boas also drew his roots from German Diffusionism, that emphasised history, migration and a more particularistic view of social transformation. Unlike the classical evolutionist and functional roots of British social anthropology, the Americans, facing genocide and massive dissemination of societies could not face up to a synchronic, functional view of timeless harmony visualised by the structural-functionalists. First of all they focused, by necessity on the concept of culture as against that of society because what they did get to study were not functioning societies but left over bits of people's lives like myths, folklore, material culture and narratives of ways of lives that had disappeared or were going to disappear soon. The people they studied, like the Navaho were a people living in reservations, in abject poverty, mental and physical misery, practicing witchcraft not having a functioning society like the study made by Evans-Pritchard on the Azande, but to survive conditions of extreme hardship.

Reflection

Diffusionism is the theory that emphasises on the spread of cultures from centers of their origin and not on parallel evolution of similar traits. Unlike evolution it is more inclined towards the decline of cultures over the passage of time and their distance from the point of their origin. They believe that original concepts occur rarely and similarities observed in cultural traits is due to diffusion.

Kroeber, a direct student of Boas and a doyen of American anthropology, gave his famous definition of culture as 'super-organic, supra-individual'; in other words something that could still be studied even if the culture bearers were gone. Boas' Historical Particularism was not a theory of sweeping generalisations but looked upon culture as a product of history, situated in specific environmental conditions and carried by people who had particular mindsets that were conducive to the nature of culture they were carrying. In other words Boas and his followers did not limit themselves to the domain of the social exclusively like the structural-functionalists but looked to history, psychology and environment to explain the nature of culture. Boas' book *The Mind of the Primitive Man*, was a study in cognition and he was also influenced by Gestalt Psychology of the German school. The concept of ethos, developed by Kroeber, where he talks of the whole as being something other than the sum of its parts, was also influenced by the Gestalt school. Other scholars emerging from the American School developed the link between culture and personality further, bringing in psychological concepts to explain cultural differences, like Ruth Benedict's (1934) work *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, based on the patterns of culture also made use of the concept of cultural ethos. Boas transmitted his interest in psychology to his students such as Margaret Mead, Linton and others who later laid the foundations of the branch of psychological anthropology that developed out of

the culture personality school. Freudian theory of early formation of personality was reformulated by anthropologists who pointed out that early childhood experiences were embedded in culturally specific methods of child rearing and therefore culture was a prime driver of personality formation. One off shoot of this theory was the concept of national culture that found great popularity.

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

> ***Reflection***
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> Sigmund Freud founded the psychoanalytic school and was known for his theories of human personality development that he identified as rooted in early childhood experiences. He explained neurosis in terms of unresolved contradictions of childhood such as the Oedipal Complex.

Check Your Progress 4

8. Which method of study is the hallmark of anthropology?

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9. Who authored the book *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*?

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10. Who is regarded as the father of American anthropology?

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11. Why did the American anthropologists while studying the people like the Navaho focused on the concept and study of cultures instead of society?

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12. Name some of the early American anthropologists.

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2.5 DEVELOPMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY IN INDIA

India was a British colony when anthropology was developing. The initial works that may be regarded as ethnographies were done by the British administrators like Hutton, with their racial bias and Eurocentrism (Channa 1992), yet they were genuinely academically oriented and were a highly educated set of people with a great deal of curiosity about the people and cultures they were trying to rule. Following the lead given by their rulers, the early scholars who we now refer to as the fathers of anthropological thinking in India, scholars like S.C. Roy and Ananthakrishna Iyer, were influenced by European philosophy of evolution and also by a universal humanism as is evident in the writings of Roy about the central Indian tribes. They worked closely with the British administration and created some very comprehensive ethnologies combining what is now distinguished as social/cultural anthropology and biological anthropology. These works like Roy's work on the Mundas and the Oraons and Iyer's work on the Cochin tribes, included all aspects of life, like history, migration, settlements, physical features of the people, their material culture, language and social institutions.

Calcutta was the first university to have a department of anthropology in 1921, and had among its staff persons like B.S. Guha, Ananthakrishna Iyer, Panchanan Mitra, N.K. Bose and others. Although social anthropology was first introduced as part of sociology syllabus in Bombay University in 1919; initially anthropology was taught as an integrated subject that was inclusive of the physical and social aspects. It was more ethnology than anthropology as can be seen from the monographs of scholars like S.C. Roy and even those like N.K. Bose, who included all aspects of a society in their description.

The initial work on what was then known as anthropology was largely the collection of data on the tribal or primitive (as they were then known) under the evolutionist assumption that these ways of life were to disappear. This work of compilation was begun by H.H. Risley, who, after the Census work in 1931 initiated an Ethnographic Survey of India. Since not all parts of India were under British rule at that time, a request had gone to the sovereign states to co-operate with this survey. The Cochin Durbar was one entity that agreed to have an ethnographic survey and appointed L.K. Ananthakrishna Iyer as Superintendent of Ethnography of the Cochin state from 1902-1924; that resulted in the two volumes of the work; *Tribes and Castes of Cochin*, published from 1908-1912. Iyer continued his study till 1920 and then joined Calcutta University in 1921 from where he retired in 1932.

It is interesting to know that as a native anthropologist Iyer evoked huge amount of interest among his European counterparts, who were eager to listen to him deliver lectures on the 'primitive' people of India. He travelled and lectured extensively in Europe and attended the very first Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, held in London, in 1934; where he was given huge recognition.

When anthropology established itself as a field science and the writing of individual ethnographies based on the holistic and functional study of single community was initiated, a number of anthropologists from western countries visited and worked in India. Prominent among them were A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, the father of anthropology in Great Britain, who wrote his classic monograph on *The Andaman Islanders*,

published by Cambridge University Press in 1922. Before him W.H.R. Rivers, who was on the border of evolutionism and functionalism; wrote his original work on *The Todas*, in 1911, a year when the Seligmans' had also published their ethnography of *The Veddas of Ceylon*.

S.C. Roy is well known for his scholarly compilations on the Central Indian tribes such as the Mundas and the Oraons. His work is similar to the early ethnographers. Another scholar in the same genre doing generalised comparative ethnology was Iravati Karve. Karve did a region wise compilation of the various kinship systems in India, including an appraisal of the ancient Indian kinship usages that she had retrieved from her study of Indian mythology. However, her seminal contribution was to show that caste and race were not linked in India; a hypothesis that had been generated by H.H. Risley and supported by scholars such as G.S. Ghurye.

These general ethnographies were followed by more specific and focused works like that of P.O. Bodding, whose work on Santal medicine (1925-1940) has by now assumed the status of a classic in medical anthropology. Bodding, a Norwegian scholar is also well known for his compilation of the Santal grammar (1922) and other works on Santal folklore and Santal riddles and witchcraft.

A student of A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, M.N Srinivas, is renowned not only for his excellent ethnography but also for developing critical insights into the institution of caste from an indigenous perspective. His use of the terms *jati* and *varna* and introduction of concepts such as Sanskritisation and Dominant Caste, has shown that an insider's perspective can be very enriching.

A number of scholars of both Indian and western origin worked in India from the 1930s onwards using field study methods to develop analytical concepts and to develop a more India oriented anthropology. From the year 1938 onwards, a large number of American anthropologists also visited and worked in India that included people like McKim Marriott, Oscar Lewis, Maurice Opler, Stanly and Ruth Freed, Robert Redfield, Kathleen Gough, Joan P Mencher, Pauline Kolenda and many others, who also worked in close collaboration with indigenous scholars and focused on specifically Indian issues, like caste, '*jajmani*', untouchability, village studies, and tribes. There were many analytical terms and categories that developed during this period, like Universalisation and Parochialisation, Little Tradition and Great Tradition, Tribalisation, Hinduisation and so on. A matter of much theoretical debate was the identification of 'tribe' as a category, given the Indian context; and the notion of tribe-caste continuum was phrased by scholars such as N.K. Bose and several others (Nathan 1997).

Some western anthropologists like Verrier Elwin and Christopher von Fürer-*Haimendorf*, practically left their original countries to go native. Elwin, a born Englishman and Christian missionary by profession and training had rejected both identities to become an Indian citizen and also to accept a Hindu identity although not a conservative upper caste one. A great admirer and follower of Gandhi, Elwin happily merged with the free and easy life of the tribes, where he married and fathered his children. He proposed his philosophy for what is now Arunachal Pradesh in terms of what he visualised as freedom of the people to choose their way of life without being subject to any external pressure. His close association with the first Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, led to the policy of Panch Sheel and a tolerant attitude towards the tribes to continue with their way of life.

Reflection

Jajmani refers to a redistributive system based on agriculture found in the caste based Indian villages. The landholding castes give share of produce to specialist caste groups who provide them with services like hair cutting, washing of clothes and agricultural labour. In many parts of India the Brahmin is also a dependent caste providing ritual services in exchange for food and other subsistence.

Universalisation and Parochialisation: Universalisation is the process of cultural transmission where a trait from a simpler society gets absorbed into the universal culture and Parochialisation is the opposite trend where a trait from a complex civilisation is accepted into a local culture in a modified form.

Little Tradition and Great Tradition: These terms were coined by Robert Redfield and refer to the cultures of the simple society and complex society respectively.

Tribalisation: The acceptance of cultural traits from a tribal society into caste society so that they develop cultural traits similar to that of the tribe. It may also mean giving up of some caste based traits and accepting rituals and food that is found among the tribes.

Hinduisation: This refers mostly to acceptance of Brahmanical values and caste system.

The Indian scholars were equally influenced in this analytical phase by the American school as they had earlier been exposed primarily to the British school and the continent. Some of the early Indian scholars who made significant contribution to the study of Indian society were S.C. Dube, Leela Dube, A Aiyappan, L.P Vidyarthi and others. From the fifties onwards, as anthropology was taught as a separate subject, the combined ethnological approach used earlier was replaced by a well-developed curriculum which included in-depth study of social anthropology, physical anthropology and archaeology.

In more recent times, from the eighties onwards, Indian anthropology has matured into a far more critical and post-colonial discipline. Works are now being focused on specific issues, like ecology, gender, exploitation of caste and question of identities in a complex and transforming world. More contemporary scholars like B.K. Roy Burman, Virginius Xaxa, Felix Padel, B.D. Sharma have turned a critical gaze upon the situation of tribes in India, in terms of their exploitation and loss of identity and resources.

Some stalwarts of Indian anthropology like S.C. Dube and N.K. Bose have given their own classification of the phases through which Indian anthropology has developed. They identify an earlier phase of compilation and making of encyclopedias and data base of the tribes, a second phase of empirical fieldwork and creation of qualitatively constructed monographs on tribes, and third, the analytical work done on them. According to D.N. Majumdar, the first phase can be called the Formulation Phase (1774-1911), the second phase can be called the Constructive Phase, lasting from 1912-1937, and the Critical phase that began from 1938. However there has been considerable change from the nineties onwards when theoretical transformations have led to reconsidering the concept of tribe itself. Following the decolonising theoretical shifts, the earlier accepted terminologies and labels such as 'primitive', 'tribe', 'wild' etc., are being reformulated and considerable rethinking is being done (Channa 2015).

It is now realised that much of the classification and labelling was done, not in deference to the reality but to fulfill the administrative needs of the power holders (Xaxa 2008, Rycroft and Dasgupta 2011). A significant development has been the writings of the indigenous scholars; those that were the objects of study have now agency and a voice to speak about themselves (Hümtsoe-Nienü, Pimomo and Tünyi 2012, Kamei 2004).

Contemporary Indian anthropology is also engaged in advocacy and applied aspects of bringing the voice of the marginal to the forefront and to also bring out the real nature of tribal society, to show that they are not 'primitive' or less developed but have had centuries of well adapted economies and are repository of knowledge systems of great value, especially for a sustainable future.

Check Your Progress 5

13. Name the University in India where the first department of Anthropology was established in 1921.

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14. In which University social anthropology was first introduced as a part of the Sociology syllabus in 1919 in India?

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15. Who is regarded as the father of anthropology in Great Britain? Name his classic monograph?

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16. Who authored *The Todas*?

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2.6 SUMMARY

In this Unit the learners have been given a sweeping glance at the discipline of anthropology, its foundations that are rooted in the history of Europe and its relevance and spread during the early years. Colonisation was a major impetus to the foundation of this subject formally as the British and other European and later American administrators needed to know about the people they were ruling. Although anthropology initially developed as the British, French and American Schools, today we have a more integrated global perspective.

The knowledge acquired by the anthropologists by their fieldwork methods were seen as assets for understanding and administering unfamiliar people. In the process the colonisers also justified colonisation based upon the evolutionary schema but were later severely criticised by field based anthropologists who discovered that most cultural traits have a relevance in their own context and cannot be graded as high or low. This perspective known as cultural relativism later made anthropologists advocate for the rights of marginal people such as the indigenous people of the world. In India too although anthropology began as a colonial subject it soon developed into a critical discipline where anthropologists tried to defend the life ways of tribal and non-urban people and also through their intervention, many laws and policies were adopted by the Indian state to allow the tribal people to enjoy their own ways of life. As these life ways are increasingly coming under threat from the spread of neo-liberal and force of global capitalism, anthropologists are coming to the defense of the marginal communities, their ways of life. They have in the process also developed critiques of conventional economic theories and concepts of development that only take economic growth as criteria. Social and cultural anthropology is thus today a very relevant subject and especially necessary for administrators and policy makers to study. In the next unit we will be looking at how social and cultural anthropology is related to other disciplines like sociology, psychology, history etc.

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2.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress

1. Auguste Comte, Herbert Spencer, Wallace and Charles Darwin were some of the early thinkers who talked about evolution of human beings and societies.
2. Herbert Spencer
3. refer to section 2.1
4. True
5. refer to section 2.2.
6. Edward B. Tylor
7. (a) physical or biological anthropology (b) social and cultural anthropology; (c) archaeological anthropology (d) linguistics anthropology.
8. Fieldwork

9. Bronislaw Malinowski
10. Franz Boas
11. refer to section 2.4.
12. Franz Boas, A.L. Kroeber, E.Evans Pritchard, Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict and many more.
13. Calcutta University
14. Bombay University
15. A. R. Radcliffe-Brown is regarded as the father of anthropology in Great Britain. *The Andaman Islanders* is his classic monograph.
16. W.H.R. Rivers authored *The Todas*.

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

Contents

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

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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 compromises 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 off shoot 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.

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3.14 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. A.R. Radcliffe-Brown suggested that social anthropology maybe 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