

## An Introduction to Anthropology: Meaning and Scope

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### Abstract

Anthropology may be considered as a recipe of arts and science in equal proportion. It is an adolescent branch of science that's why bulk of science community is not properly familiar with this. At present anthropology is the only branch of science, which deals with the man and his work including his physical, cultural and social activities as whole. It is concerned with human species and behavior in all adolescent from emergence to present study with evolutionary phases. Anthropology never concerned with particular person as such but it focus on men in "group", with races and peoples and their work and emotions. So anthropology may be defined briefly as the "science of group of men". Anthropology has two main branches Physical Anthropology and Cultural Anthropology. The physical anthropologists study only Homo sapiens out of the wide range of living organisms. By making comparative study on different group of human and his near relatives known as primates, the physical anthropologist classify the man's position in animal kingdom. Cultural Anthropology deals with learned behavioral characteristics of the past, present and future of human societies. Now, the main fields of studies under Cultural Anthropology are: Prehistoric archaeology, ethnology and ethno-linguistics. The human beings are the ruler of this planet at present due to his wisdom, intellectual ability and communication skills. With the help of anthropological studies that is actually the past and present experience we can able to make proper adaptation and acclimatization with the community, nature and environment that leads to our bright and better future otherwise we will also extinct from the earth as like many other species. To save our long lasting existence development of anthropology at its full swing is mandatory for us.

**Keywords:** *Civilization; Evolution; Paleontology; Stratigraphy; Radio-carbon dating, Prehistoric Archaeology; Swots; linguistics; Neoliberalism.*

### Introduction

The study of human and his diversified features in relatively a fresh venture has been called anthropology. It may be considered as a recipe of arts and science in equal proportion. It is an adolescent branch of science that's why bulk of science community is not properly familiar with

this. As usually misinterpreting anthropology is neither nugatory nor it is study of offbeat predaceous or harrow for the remnants of primitive civilization.

It fundamentally reviews the human beings own lives. It is a well defined brand of science which deals with the life of man in all aspects from the time of his dawn till now. It cuddles a huge area

of research which perspective man from various slants. At present anthropology is the only branch of science which deals with the man and his work including his physical, cultural and social activities as whole.

### Meaning of anthropology

Anthropology also known as "the science of man and his work and behavior", because it has been originated from two Greek words, *Anthropos* means man and *Logos* means study/science of man. Anthropology is concerned with human species and behavior in all adolescent from emergence to present study with evolutionary phases. Other branches of science concerned with their related single aspect of study like hematology, microbiology, sociology, psychology, psychiatry etc. but the anthropology deals with the multiple aspects of human and human behavior. Anthropology never concerned with particular person as such but it focus on men in "group", with races and peoples and their work and emotions. So anthropology may be defined briefly as the "science of group of men". The anthropologist concentrate on a community consist of different races or people with tracking their former and current lives. In this regard anthropology means total study of man. It may be called integrated or universal field or a science of "man in it's totally. Anthropology is a fusion of social and biological science. It not only deals with human as a member of animal kingdom but also concerned with man's behavior as a member of society of society. Growth of civilization and structural evolution of mankind both are studied from their dawn to the present.

### Scope of Anthropology

Anthropology has two main branches:

- A. Physical Anthropology and
- B. Cultural Anthropology.

Physical Anthropology deals mainly with:

- Human biology
- Human evolution
- Human variation and
- Human genetics.

*Human Biology:* The physical anthropologist study only Homo sapiens out of the wide range of living organisms. By making comparative study on different groups of human and his near relatives

known as primates, the physical anthropologist classify the man's position in animal kingdom. That's why there is a close relationship between physical anthropologist and study of other living beings.

*Human Evolution:* Study of human evolution is the main objective of physical anthropology. It is still not very clear that under what conditions life had appeared on earth. But from scientific proof it has been established that the first living organism that had appeared on earth consisted one cell only, which is known as a unicellular organism converted into multi cellular and finally a complex form of animal known as man had emerge and this total progression from amoeba to man is called evolution. All living forms of humanity today belong to the single genus species on Homo sapiens. Man is said to have emerged during the quaternary epoch of Cenozoic era. As time proceeds, variation of man had evolved from the date of his origin. Anatomy and paleontology are the key subjects in analysis of human evolution. Anatomy gives us important information for study of racial differences and paleontology find and the age of fossils.

*Human Variation:* The physical anthropologist after having studies the origin, development and place of evolution of man focuses his attention on the study of the different varieties of man. Outwardly through they appear different, all men have some common characteristics and belong to the species- Homo-sapiens. However, it is generally found that the common hereditary does not resemble those of other groups in various ways. Each of these groups is designated as race. So, in Physical Anthropology the different aspects of race are studied. Somatology- Somato-sopic observation and anthropometry is useful for this purpose.

*Human Genetics:* In recent times the attention of physical anthropologist has been diverted to Genetics a branch of biology, which deals with descent, variation and heredity. They now study the blood types, difference in musculature etc. They also study the group differences in time of sexual maturation, in growth rates and various disease immunities. The physical anthropologist studies also the influences of the natural environment on man and trees to find out whether the physical traits of man are affected by environment. Moreover, he studies the problems associated with physical changes, effects of food and mode of life on racial and physical characteristics.

### **Other Studies of Physical Anthropology**

Another aspect of study of Physical Anthropology is demography which is directly related to fertility and mortality. There are various factors including heredity and environment that influence fertility and mortality.

There is another subject called pedagogical anthropology which is directly concerned with education. In various educational fields pedagogical studies are utilized by many advanced countries. On the whole, the Physical Anthropology is highly a specialized branch of Anthropology.

### **Scope of Cultural Anthropology**

In order to understand culture one must know the steps by which mankind has transformed itself from an instinct dominated anthropoid into a cultural adaptive human being. Cultural Anthropology deals with learned behavioral characteristics of the past, present and future of human societies. Now, the main fields of studies under Cultural Anthropology are: Prehistoric archaeology, ethnology and ethno-linguistics. Under ethnology again economic anthropology, social anthropology, ethnography, religion, art, musicology, recreation, folklore etc. are studied.

### **Prehistoric Archaeology**

It is now a specialized branch of Cultural Anthropology. The pre historians tell us about the extinct peoples and their cultures and the past phases of living peoples. They enlighten us with how the prehistoric people coped with the natural setting by making tools and implements, weapons and other necessary equipments in order to serve their biological and psychological needs such as food, clothing, art etc. Prehistoric archaeology has also been established the sequence of culture and dating the past by adopting the various methods such as Stratigraphy, Radio-carbon methods, etc.

### **Paleontology**

There is another scientific discipline called paleontology which is closely associated with prehistory and helpful to make a study on the extinct races from their fossilized forms. It tells us how the modern races have evolved from those extinct fossil races.

*Technology:* In order to satisfy his wants and to live by adjusting with the natural environment, man had to make some material objects such as tools and implements, weapons, utensils, clothes, houses, canoes etc. This is called the material culture of the people. The study of the techniques of making these objects of material culture is known as Technology. This aspect of culture in the past is being studied with the help of Prehistoric Archaeology.

### **Ethnology**

Ethnology interprets the facts and emphasizes the theory of culture on data collected through ethnographic studies, classifies them and formulates principles with regards to the nature of human behavior, evolution and functioning of culture.

### **Ethnography**

Ethnography is the study of the culture of the living peoples of the planet through direct and indirect observation of behavior. It involves the collection of data only, the raw materials for scientific anthropologist to know the links between the different culture and the principles escort the socio culture system.

### **Economic Anthropology**

The anthropologist swots different features of production, distribution and consumption of material goods and their relationships with other aspects of the socio-cultural complex. It is a field that attempts to explain human economic behavior in its widest historic, geographic and cultural scope. He also analyses how far the economic factors are responsible to the growth of socio-cultural system of a people. It mainly focuses on exchange economy.

### **Social Anthropology**

Man is a gregarious animal and lives in a society. So he has to adapt to the social environment and learn to live in social cohesion. A man is born in a family, the smallest unit of a society. He is socialized through this unit. As a society is a web of social relationships, a man is tied to the society with various strings of social relationships. Man is also involved in social institutions such as marriage, government, law etc. So in adjusting with social environment and to keep

the society in continuity, one has to abide by the various laws and customs formulated by the society. But society has got intimate relationship with culture which is created by man. Culture exists to make the society survive but without the existence of society culture has no entity. So the social anthropologist studies various aspects of society in keeping with the cultural development.

### **Religion**

The man is curious “wise man” and at present he govern the entire earth but still either he could not explain or control many natural phenomenon. This situation made him think and believe that there were some super natural powers in the background by the action of which these phenomenon’s had come in to being. So the religion is a combination of psychic reaction and acclimatization of man to the super natural world. In order to appease those super natural powers he did some megalic-religious activities called rituals. Thus the anthropologists study the varieties of rituals connected with different beliefs and practices found among different groups of people living in different parts of the world and how they are related to their day to day activities which make them survive peacefully.

### **Art, Musicology, Recreation**

By adapting to the natural, social and supernatural environments in order to satisfy his biological, social and spiritual needs man wants to undertake such other activities as would give him some satisfaction and relaxation. That is why man took to art and recreation such as songs and dances, folk tales, poetry, play, art and various other intellectual pursuits. With a view to improving the standard of life man takes to spiritual pursuits like morality, nurses and values of life. So the cultural anthropologist includes these topics to make a comparative study.

### **Folklore**

Folklore may be treated as one of the branches of Cultural Anthropology. But it has also been treated as a separate discipline. It is a science “which deals with the survivals of archaic beliefs and customs in civilized peoples. It embraces everything relating to ancient observances and customs, to the notions, beliefs, traditions, superstitions and prejudice

of the common people. But also folk tales, songs, legends, myths, proverbs, riddles, folk music and folk dance as well as folk drama belong to the sphere of folklore”.

### **Ethnolinguistics**

Ethnolinguistics is a field of linguistics which studies the relationship between language and culture, and the way different ethnic groups perceive the world. It is the combination between ethnology and linguistics. It is the study of human speech and of the various dead and living languages and dialects of the different groups of people of the world. By studying these anthropologist tries to find out the origin and development of the languages and their interrelationships. Then they are classified.

### **Other Specialties of Cultural Anthropology**

*Ethno-ecology:* This is a special sub-field of anthropological study which deals with adaptation of human beings to their total environment.

### **Urban Anthropology**

It is a subset of anthropology concerned with study of urban cultures and issues of urbanization, poverty, urban space, social relations, and neoliberalism. Urban anthropology is heavily influenced by sociology, especially the Chicago School of Urban Sociology. The traditional difference between sociology and anthropology was that the former was traditionally conceived as the study of civilized populations, whilst anthropology was approached as the study of primitive populations. In addition sociologist would normally study a large population sample while anthropologists relied on fewer informants with deeper relations.

### **Political Anthropology**

Political anthropology developed as a discipline concerned primarily with politics in stateless societies, a new development started from the 1960s, and is still unfolding: anthropologists started increasingly to study more “complex” social settings in which the presence of states, bureaucracies and markets entered both ethnographic accounts and analysis of local phenomena

## Applied Anthropology and Action Anthropology

Nowadays, there are various applications of Anthropology. Mentioned below are some of its applications.

### Anthropometry

Anthropometry is the science of measuring the different limbs of the body. It is an inevitable part of Physical Anthropology, and with its help various measurements of the limbs of the body are taken so as to know the proportions of the limbs. With this knowledge the physical anthropologists can give advice in respect of sitting arrangements in aeroplanes, railways, class rooms, offices etc. It also helpful in determining the limb length discrepancy disorders and there management planning.

Physical Anthropology is also useful in detecting criminals. With the knowledge of foot and hand prints it becomes easier to detect criminals as the types of foot and hand prints are never changed during man's life time. Similarly analyses of hair texture and blood groups also help in detecting criminals. The physical anthropologist can also advise with regard to finding out the father of the son born to an unmarried mother.

The population explosion is a great problem in India, Bangladesh and North Africa. Population explosion has become a menace to the whole mankind. Two-pronged strategy to produce more food as well as to control human population by way of green revolution and family planning programmes had been made to cope with this problem. The services of the cultural anthropologists are useful in the planning of these development programmes. Similarly for successful implementations of prohibition, family planning, adult education and various other development programmes the services of the cultural anthropologists are essential. The various data collected by anthropologists are the key factor in planning of human welfare programmes by the government or society.

National disintegration is another erosive problem in India. The services of both the physical and cultural anthropologists are essential to help solve the problems of castism, communalism, regionalism, racialism etc. Nowadays, the problems of labor management in various industries have been acute and labor strikes frequently take place. These problems could be mitigated to a great extent if the living and psychological conditions

of laborers are studied earlier with the help of the cultural anthropologists.

### Action Anthropology

It has been coined by Sol Tax. According to him an action anthropologist is to study the processes of change in the society and help the people to overcome the adverse effects of change and guide planning in such a way that the people do better in the process of change.

### Conclusion

Anthropology give us knowledge regarding human society in there all aspects from origin to current status including their evolution, work and emotions, so we can understand our past and present very well.

The human beings are the ruler of this planet at present due to his wisdom, intellectual ability and communication skills. With the help of anthropological studies that is actually the past and present experience we can able to make proper adaptation and acclimatization with the community, nature and environment that leads to our bright and better future otherwise we will also extinct from the earth as like dinosaurs. To save our long lasting existence development of anthropology at its full swing is mandatory for us.

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