

Block

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ANTHROPOLOGICAL THEORIES-II

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BLOCK 4 ANTHROPOLOGICAL THEORIES-II

Introduction

Anthropology made forays into different perceptions about society and culture once it became clear that the structural-functional models were not workable, at least in the light of the post-colonial and post-World War II developments in the global scenario. Not all these theories were however derived from new roots or beginnings. The concept of cultural configuration or patterns or ethos, which laid the foundations for the culture and personality school was derived from German intellectual roots of the Gestalt psychology and found its way into the American Cultural tradition through the persona of Franz Boas. From the Forties onwards we also see the influence of USA increasing in anthropology, in direct proportion to its global political presence. However counter to the presence of USA was the strong influence of Marxism in intellectual circles all over the world but largely emanating from France. The towering presence of French liberal Left thinking was found in anthropology also and we had a vibrant engagement with not only Marxist but Neo-Marxist thinking also deriving from Althusser and Lacan.

The neo-Marxist influence went deep into reformulating the concept of culture itself and right from Julian Steward onwards we find that the dialectical method informed the notion of social change and reformulated the entire manner of understanding culture and society, not as static or as given traditions but as vibrant and ongoing processes. Change was no longer external but an aspect of normal ongoing society.

Post colonial intellectual streams were critical of the positivist methodology and feminist thinking established a decentralised view of looking at the world, where one could gaze from the margins and construct different versions of the social reality as different from the dominant point of view that was at least in the early period of anthropology (and of most other disciplines) both andocentric and Eurocentric.

The structuralism of Levi-Strauss was one of the last attempts to create a universal frame of human knowledge based on the deep structures of the human mind that to Levi-Strauss appeared to be dialectical. Thus Structuralism was also influenced by Marxism in being essentially dialectical and also looking for the reality at levels deeper than the apparent or obvious. Levi-Strauss had a lasting influence on anthropology and influenced many other scholars, most notably Leach. However the positivist stand of structuralism was finally taken over by post-structuralist and post-modern theory. The essential essence of these theories was to situate knowledge in its historical and political context. The feminist and post-colonial scholars like Donna Haraway and Edward Said showed that the knowledge and science propagated by European and male scholars was not 'factual' but subjectively constructed out of their colonial, capitalist and classical economic bias. In the turning around of social and cultural theory we also see the influence of a new science of Physics that emerged in the 20th century that looked critically at a dualism of matter and mind. The more human beings have been searching for knowledge the more baffled they are becoming as to the true essence of this universe. Therefore social science is far more focused on contestation, confusion and deconstruction of established truths than ever before.

UNIT 1 CULTURE AND PERSONALITY

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- 1.1 Introduction
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Suggested Reading

Sample Questions

Learning Objectives



At the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- explain how personality play significant role in the formation of cultural pattern;
- understand the impact of culture on personality formation; and
- know the impact of both culture and personality on each other in the formation of cultural group.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The culture personality school of thought began principally in the United States in the 1930s. The above school explained relationships between childrearing customs and human behaviours in different societies. The culture personality theory combined elements of psychology, anthropology, and sociology, but principally the theory involved the application of psychoanalytic principles to ethnographic data. This unit deals with different anthropological writings surrounding this theme.

1.2 MEANING AND DETERMINANTS OF CULTURE AND PERSONALITY

The term culture and personality has been used in several senses, both popularly and psychologically. Before going into discussion of theory let us first discuss the meaning and determinants of culture and personality. Culture is a term practically used in everyday life. Anthropological meaning of culture is different from its popular meaning. Defining culture has never been as simple for anthropologists. It is no wonder in anthropology; culture has over 300 definitions of this concept. For the convenience of learners culture herein is used to mean any knowledge that a person/individual has acquired as a member of his/her society. Such knowledge is important because it subsequently influences the shaping of his/her personality. It was widely believed that early enculturation in particular has very important

bearing on personality development of the child as he/she grows into adulthood. The conceptualisation of culture is by no means a simple matter. One possible way to think about culture is that “culture is to society what memory is to individuals” (Kluckhohn 1954). It includes what has worked in the experience of a society, so that it was worth transmitting to future generations.

The term personality is derived from the Latin word *persona* meaning a mask or character. Personality is a patterned body of habits, traits, attitudes and ideas of an individual as these are organised externally into roles and statuses and as they relate internally to motivation, goals and various aspects of selfhood. It is a term used in routine life as the distinctive way a person thinks, feels and behaves. But in anthropology, the term is used in a different sense. Funder (1997) defined personality as “an individual’s characteristic pattern of thought, emotion, and behaviour, together with the psychological mechanisms—hidden or not—behind those patterns”. Whereas Ralph Linton (1945) defines personality as the individual’s mental qualities the sum total of his rational faculties, perceptions, ideas, habits and conditional emotional responses. He states that there is a close relation between personality and culture of the society to which the individual belongs. The personality of every individual within the society develops and functions in constant association with its culture. Personality affects culture and culture affects personality. In short he says personality embraces the total organised aggregate of psychological processes and status pertaining to the individual.

There are four main factors or determinants, which affect the personality formation. They are environment, heredity, culture and peculiar experiences. The influence of geographical or physical environment plays very important role to determine the variation in personality construction of members of a group. According to physical environment humans come to form ideas and attitudes where he/she lives in. A close relationship exists between environment, culture and personality. To the amount that the environment determines cultural development and to the extent that culture in turn determines personality. In the 18th century Montesquieu claimed that the bravery of those blessed by a cold climate enables them to maintain their liberties. Great heat weakens courage while cold causes certain vigor of body and mind. The people those who live in mountain as well as deserts areas are usually bold, hard and powerful. Nevertheless physical conditions are more permissive and limiting factors than causative factors. People who live in mountain as well as in deserts areas set the limits within which the personality develops. For example Andaman tribes have different cultural personality than Fiji tribes because of the fact that the above two cultural groups develop in two different geographical environments.

Heredity is another factor which determines the traits of human personality. Some of the similarities in individual/group personality are said to be due to his common heredity. Some set of biological needs and capacities are inherited by human group in every society. These common biological needs and capacities explain some of the similarities in personality of the particular group. For example humankind tends to resemble his/her parents in physical appearance and intelligence. However, human heredity does not mould human personality alone and independently. There is assumption that functioning of human life in human beings there are genes for normal personality traits as well as there are genes for other aspects. Heredity is one of determinants that provides the materials out of which experience will mould the personality. Experience determines the way these materials will be used. Because of his/her heredity an individual may be energetic but

whether he is active on his own belief or on behalf of others is a matter of his training.

Culture plays a valuable role in personality development. In many countries all over the world, the influence of culture on personality formation can be seen in different cultural groups. According to some anthropologists and sociologists personality is the subjective aspect of culture. They look at personality and culture as two sides of same coin. Spiro had perceived that the development of personality and the acquisition of culture are not different processes but one and the same learning process. He considered Personality as an individual aspect of culture while culture is a collective aspect of personality. In every culture particular type of personality developed. Certain cultural environment sets its participant members off from other human beings operating under different cultural environments. According to Frank culture is a coercive influence dominating the individual and molding his personality by virtue of the ideas, conceptions and beliefs which had brought to bear on him through communal life. The culture furnishes the raw material of out of which the individual makes his life. The social institutions of the particular society affect the personality of the group members. In every society from the moment of birth, the child is treated in such ways which shape his personality. Every culture applies a series of general influences upon the individuals who grow up under it. It can be summed up that culture greatly moulds personality of individual or group. The ideas and behaviour of the individuals are largely the results of cultural background. However, it should not be concluded that culture is a massive dye that shapes all that come under it with an identical pattern. Personality traits differ within culture. Personality is not totally determined by culture even though no personality escapes its influence. It is only one determinant among others.

Last but not the least personality is also determined by another factor, namely situational experiences. In this there are two types of experiences one those that stem from continuous association with one's group, second those that arise suddenly and are not likely to recur. In type one people who interact with the child daily has a major influence on his personality. For example the personality of parents does more to affect a child's personality. The overall process of socialisation; ranging from social rituals to table manners to getting along with others are consciously inculcated in the child by the parents. The child learns everything from his parents' language to behaviour. In the type situational experiences the relationship of the child with the mother, father and siblings affect profoundly the organisation of his drives and emotions, the deeper and subconscious aspects of his personality. In the second type group influence is relatively greater in early childhood. Child's personality moulds by group interaction. Personality may also be inferred by social situations. According to social researchers an individual may show honesty in one situation and not in another. The same is true for other personality traits also. Personality traits tend to be specific responses to particular situations rather than general behaviour patterns. It is a dynamic unity with a creative potential.

The above various determinant factors are responsible for personality formation, development and maintenance. Further than the combined influence of these factors however the relative contribution of each factor to the development of personality varies with the characteristic or personality process involved and perhaps with the individual concerned. However, there is no way yet known to measure the effect of each determinant factor or to state how the factors combine to produce a given result. For example, the behaviour of juvenile delinquent is affected by his heredity

and by his family. But how much is contributed by each factor cannot be measured in exact terms.

The term personality, character and temperament have been used synonymously by many scholars in various disciplines. Many disciplines like biology, psychology, sociology and anthropology have taken keen interest in the study of personality. It is because of the interdisciplinary approach the term personality has been used to denote various meanings. A holistic study of personality can be done only by multidisciplinary approach like biologists deal with physiological characteristics, sociologists can attempt to know with the influence of social environment, Psychologists with mental attributes, whereas anthropologists are concerned with the relationship between culture and personality.

Psychological and anthropological aspect is the final aspect to the study of culture and personality. In this particular aspect we can include cultural background, interest, sentiment, attitudes, values, temperament, impulse, aptitude, and motivation of an individual.

Activity

Try to assess different cultures and their personalities in your area from anthropological perspective.

1.3 CULTURE AND PERSONALITY SCHOOL OF THOUGHT

The culture personality school of thought began principally in the United States in the 1930s. The above school explained relationships between childrearing customs and human behaviours in different societies. The culture personality theory combined elements of psychology, anthropology, and sociology, but principally theory involved the application of psychoanalytic principles to ethnographic data. The school emphasised the cultural moulding of the personality and focused on the development of the individual. Culture-and-personality theorists argued that personality types were created in socialisation, and they placed particular emphasis on child-rearing practices such as feeding, weaning, and toilet training. The pioneers of this school of thought were students of Franz Boas and Kroeber. They include American anthropologists like Ruth Benedict, Margaret Mead, Linton, Kardiner and Cora Du-Bois.

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) was one of the first psychologists to break the barrier between anthropology and psychology. His best known anthropological work is Totem and Taboo. In his book, Freud provides an insightful description to taboos and their origination; yet his theory on the origin of totems is somewhat speculative. His main work on the origin of totemism, incest taboo, exogamy and the Oedipus complex, is well known, for he argued the existence of a primal horde, the leader of which was the oldest male, who assumed exclusive sexual rights over all females in the group. Frustrated, the sons murdered and ate their father; but overcome by guilt afterwards, the sons decided to obey commands and abstain from sexual intercourse with their mothers and sisters. Selecting a totem animal as a symbolic father substitute, they declared that it must be protected during the year and consumed only on ritual occasions. These ritual totem meals thus reenacted their original deed and reinforced their self-imposed incest prohibitions. Freud thus, concluded that all cultures originate from this sacrificial meal.

Best known for his psychoanalysis, Freud saw the trauma of childhood reflected in the neuroses of adults. He established the Oedipus complex as a universal story in which the son, jealous of his father's attentions on his mother, entertains hostility towards the father and develops an erotic attachment to his mother. This desire is felt among all men; yet is buried by repression and then resurfaces in the actions of adulthood. Freud's psychoanalysis was an attempt to uncover the repressed childhood trauma through a series of word associations, dream analysis, and free-flow talking.

His Oedipus complex analysis (in which a son hates his father for his strict authority and is jealous of his sexual prerogatives over the mother, yet loves him for strength and protection) among all societies, was also highly criticised and Malinowski, who tested this hypothesis among the matrilineal Trobriand society (1922), rejected Freud's views on the universality of the Oedipus complex. Franz Boas (1858-1942), though he was not interested in psychology, reacted to Freud's analysis and said that his method was one sided and could do nothing to advance understanding of cultural development. Kroeber (1876-1960) rejected Freud's conjectures by the phrase "bewilderingly fertile imagination". At the same time Kroeber, realised the importance of the psychological dimension of culture, which he felt should not be ignored. This Freudian hypothesis influenced early anthropological research on culture and personality giving birth to what is known as Psychological Anthropology.

The primary aim of the culture and personality school of thought, is to examine the interrelationships between culture and personality. The attempts of this school are to study culture as it is embodied in the character of its members, rather than seeking to analyse culture as it is manifested in material items or social institutions.

1.3.1 Impact of Personality on Culture

Ruth Benedict (1887-1948) a student of Franz Boas, documented in her PhD dissertation the rapidly deteriorating Native American societies, providing the impetus to pursue culture and personality studies. Through her work on the patterning of culture at an individual level, Benedict opened anthropology into a much larger discussion between the disciplines of anthropology and psychology. Idea of "pattern" was already in use before her, but credit goes to her for providing a methodological model for studying human culture in terms of "pattern" rather than social contents. She was of the opinion that life crisis rites are only one of the several ways in which patterns of culture emerge and are reflected in the behaviour of members of a group. All the basic institutions that are a part of the culture, tend to mirror the overall pattern for that culture. This point was successfully highlighted in her book *Patterns of Culture* (1934) which is considered to be a classic work in anthropology.

Ruth Benedict consideration of cultures as integrated wholes where each is configured to be different from all other cultures; is perhaps one of the most significant. She also stressed that a culture is organised around a basic theme, and that all of the various elements of that culture fit together. A culture according to Benedict is analogous to an individual in that it is more or less a consistent pattern of thought and action. Hence, she says any analysis of culture requires a psychological approach. According to her when traits and complexes become related to each other in functional roles, a cultural pattern is formed. Many cultural patterns integrate themselves into a functional whole and form a special design of a whole culture. This special design of whole culture is called configuration of

culture. The integration of culture is on the basis of tendency seen in all aspects of culture. This tendency is called by Benedict "special genius" that brings about integration. She says there are two types of geniuses found in human society i.e. Apollonian and Dionysian. In Apollonian pattern, one will see the existence of peace, discipline and kindness. The Dionysian culture is characterised by a great deal of changes and aggressiveness. These two geniuses mold the personality of the members of their group. The Apollonian personality compels members of the group to behave in one form and the Dionysian personality in the other. This will lead to the formation of special cultural characteristics for the group concerned, thus personality influencing the culture.

Applying this approach to cross-cultural studies she did her fieldwork among the Zuni, Cochiti and Pima tribes of America. Benedict looked at different societies and described them in terms of their basic personality configurations. Pointing out how these personality types fit in with the overall culture. In her monograph *Patterns of Culture* (1934) she discussed, through literature, contrastive personality types between Zuni of the Southwest America and Kwakiutl of the Northeast Coast of North America. The primary occupations of the two communities are different, the Zuni are foragers in a resource-rich environment whereas the Kwakiutl are agriculturists. She describes Zunis as very cooperative, never excessive in any aspect of their life. The typical Zuni was a person who sought to mingle with the group, and who did not wish to stand out as a superior among the other members of the tribe. Again she went on to point out how this basic personality type was reinforced in other elements of Zuni culture. Child training patterns were designed to suppress individuality. Initiation ceremonies were characterised by a lack of ordeal, and the youths were initiated in a group setting. Marriage was relatively casual. Leadership among the Zuni was ignored whenever possible, and was accepted only with great reluctance. Priests were low key individuals and special positions of power were delegated on a group basis, so that there was a medicine society rather than a single powerful medicine man. Among them death was an occasion for little mourning.

While comparing her study she found cultural configuration of Kwakiutl much different from that of the Zuni. According to cultural pattern Kwakiutl were characterised by a frenzied outlook, excess being the rule rather than the exception. They were ambitious and striving, and individuality was emphasised in every aspect of their life. The ideal man among the community was the one who always attempted to prove his superiority. Child rearing practices reinforced this pattern, emphasising the achievement of the individual over cooperation with the group. In the initiation ceremonies, a boy was expected go out by himself and experience a personal relationship with the supernatural. Marriage entailed tremendous celebration Leadership among this community was characterised by a constant struggle for power, which must be sought by any possible means. Religious positions included that of the shaman, a priest who wielded enormous personal power. Even the death ritual among the Kwakiutl reinforced this overall configuration. A death was a major event, an occasion for elaborate mourning and was not accepted calmly and peacefully as among the Zuni.

She considered the Zuni to be non-competitive, non-aggressive, and gentle etc., whereas the Kwakiutl to be characterised by strife, factionalism, painful ceremonies, etc. On the basis of above characteristics in her view the two tribal communities are represented by to contrastive psychological attributes on the basis of which she describe Zuni as Apollonian and Kwakiutl as, Dionysian after the Greek Gods

of wine and light (i.e. wine as Dionysian and light as Apollonian) respectively. These categories were derived from the work of Friedrich Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* (1956), a study on the origins of Greek drama. Benedict rejected Freud's notions of cultural evolution as unscientific and ethnocentric, and remained loyal to Wilhel Dilthey, who believed that the objective of psychology was to understand the inner mind and who proposed existence of different worldviews, which were much like the categories she used to describe the above personality types. She says it is a pattern that describes the typical member of the society, and to which all members conform to some extent.

During the Second World War the need was felt to understand the national characteristics of Japan and some of the American anthropologists helped in by analysing it through the Japanese films, and books on the history and culture of Japan. They concluded that the strict toilet training among the Japanese made them aggressive fighter in warfare. Ruth Benedict made a significant contribution in developing and then applying the "content analysis method" to study the culture at a distance. This content analysis method was developed by Benedict, when anthropologist could not freely travel to do fieldwork among the indigenous societies during World War II. The U.S. office of War information had asked her to undertake research on occupied or enemy nation. She selected Japan as her first target and wrote the famous work *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (1946) depicting the culture of that nation in a holistic manner, although she never visited Japan. She gathered material for her monograph from historical documents, literature readings of Japanese life and interviews of Japanese immigrants. After going through all these data properly, she analysed and arrived at many significant conclusions about the Japanese society. To study culture at a distance it was first of its kind in the anthropological research. She describes Japanese culture has two methods of child rearing. In Japan during childhood an individual is given full love, freedom, care and cooperation. But when he or she reaches the stage of adolescence, a strict discipline is imposed. He or she is asked to behave in manner which will be pleasant and appealing to elders. She or he as adolescence is not expected to break cultural traditions. In fact the individual has to work according to the instructions provided by the family traditions. This paradox in personality traits of Japanese appears due to different cultural traditions of rearing in two periods, i.e. childhood and adolescence. She compares childrearing practices in Japan to the national flower of Japan Chrysanthemum and the Sword. Chrysanthemum symbolises the socialisation of a child during childhood. At the time of childhood, the Japanese parents take every care of their children to make them blossom like a chrysanthemum flower. When the children are fully blossomed like adolescents, they have to face a tough life. Parents leave them to earn something and lead independent life. As a result of this, children become aggressive and violent. A sword always hangs on their neck, because they do not seek cooperation from the elders.

During the late forties the school flourished with some of the best known studies on national character like Ruth Benedict's *Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (1946) on the Japanese national character and Geoffrey Gorer and John Rickman's *The People of Great Russia: A Psychological Study* (1949). The interest in understanding national character though faded after 1950s. Because in their studies the above authors tried, following the neo-Freudian approach, to link early childrearing practices with adult personality.

1.3.2 Impact of Culture on Personality Formation

Margaret Mead (1901-1978) another student of Franz Boas, also investigated the relationship between culture and personality. Her monograph *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1949) established her as one of the leading lady anthropologists of the day. Starting as a configurationalist, Mead also wrote about national character. Hired in World War II by the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), Mead researched the national character of England and compared it to that found within the United States. She determined that in each society the norms for interaction between the sexes differed, leading to many misunderstandings between the two otherwise similar cultures.

In her well-known book *Coming of Age in Samoa*, based on nine months intensive fieldwork, compares Samoan with American adolescent girls. She hypothesized that the stresses related to puberty in girls were culturally and not biologically determined, as her study showed such stresses were mainly associated with American adolescents whereas the Samoan adolescents had relatively an easy transition into sexual maturation.

While studying Samoa she found that the whole cultural mood in Samoa was much less emotional than that in America. For example, the facts of birth, death and sex were not hidden from Samoan children. Premarital sex was considered natural and did not demand strong emotional involvements and adolescents were not confronted with the necessity of selecting from a variety of often conflicting standards of ethics and values. Adolescence was, thus, not marked by storm and stress in Samoa, but was simply a part of the gradual development of life. The major point of the study was, in Mead's own words (1939) "the documentation, over and over, of the fact that human nature is not rigid and unyielding".

In her study on Samoan, Margaret Mead claims that children are taught early in their life that if they behave well or are quiet and obedient they can have their good way of life. Arrogance, flippancy and courage are not the qualities emphasised either for boy or girl. The children are expected to get up early, be obedient and cheerful, play with children of their own sex, etc. and the adults are expected to be industrious, skillful, loyal to their relatives, wise, peaceful, serene, gentle, generous, altruistic, etc.

During fieldwork she observed that, little girls move about together and have antagonistic and avoidance relationship with boys. On the other hand, when they grow up boys and girls begin to interact during parties and fishing expeditions. As long as a boy and a girl are not committing incest any amorous activities between them, including slipping into the bush together, are considered natural and adults pay little attention to such relationships. As a result, the transition from adolescence to adulthood is smooth and stress-free unlike such transition among the Americans. Hence she concluded that cultural conditioning, not biological changes associated with adolescence, makes it stressful. Criticisms notwithstanding, subsequent studies have lent support to her basic theory that childhood upbringing influences formation of adult personality.

Mead's finding on Samoa was very much supported by Edward Sapir, who realised that the anthropological studies of personality represented entirely a new approach to the understanding of culture. He also argued that the application of psycho-analytic methods, in the study of culture, would add a new dimension to ethnological field work and analysis, he was so much interested in this psycho-analytic method.

After studying the Samoan society, Mead studied the personality formation of the children of New Guinea with special reference to Manus tribe, which was published as *Growing up in New Guinea* (1930). This study is concerned with the kind of enculturation processes by which Manus of New Guinea brought their children up from infancy to childhood and childhood to adulthood. In fact, the book deals with educative role of culture in development of personality of child through different ages of life such as infancy, childhood and adulthood etc.

The third important book of Mead is entitled *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies* (1935). In this particular study Mead deals with the impact of culture on personality formation. In this study like Benedict, Mead compared three different cultures, namely Arapesh, Mundugumor and Tschambuli, to test the range of variation of cultural patterns. The study was to understand why societies living in same area differ in their character, personality and temperament and why within the same society, temperaments of male and female differ. From her study she found that in Arapesh, cultural environments are such that both males and females have submissive temperament. In their culture, such personality traits are the matter of great praise and all members in this society follow these cultural traits with great enthusiasm. Among Mundugumor society, both males and females are aggressive. In this society, the personality traits of its members are reflected by such characters as suspiciousness, competition, quarrelsomeness, ego, jealousy, and unkindness. The cultural environment of Mundugumor is such that every member is found to be in struggle, conflict, and competition with each other. These cultural practices have direct bearing upon the personality formation of members of Mundugumor. The cultural traditions of Tschambuli are such that males acquire submissive temperament and females possess aggressive character. It is a matrilineal society dominated by female authority. The submissive character among males and aggressive character among females of their culture are reflected in the personality traits of Tschambuli (Upadhyay and Pandey, 1993).

From the above discussion of these three societies Mead reflected that differences in personality types of male and female in the same society or in different societies are due to cultural processes, which differ from one cultural group to another or from one society to another. She concludes by saying that it is a culture influence which moulds the character, temperament and personality of members of the group.

Mead did not confine herself to the study of character, temperament and personality of different cultural groups. She opined that the study of national character can be done by the culture and personality approach. Culture has been developed by human beings and is successively learned by each generation. The learned behaviour is reflected in the character of group of nation. Thus, the study of national character has historical depth of traditions, continuity and change as various dimensions. In her study *Keep Your Powder Dry: An Anthropologist Looks at America* (1942), she deals with the national character of America. She did not find difference in the personality of a baby in America as compared to Japan and Russia. Thus, the early personality was similar. They gradually start differing as the growth follows and family education and school education become effective.

Activity

What influence has your cultural background had on you? Explain in your own words

1.3.3 Impact of Culture on Personality and Vice-versa

The other early anthropologists who had made significant contribution to this field are Ralph Linton (1893-1953), Abram Kardiner (1891-1981), and Cora Du Bois (1903-1991). The three authors regard culture and personality as interdependent and complementary to each other. They tried to correlate the type of cultural patterns with the type of individual personalities obtained in that society. They firmly believed that as a consequence of continuous contact with a particular type of cultural pattern, similar types of personalities emerge. Linton was a co-founder of the basic personality structure theory with Kardiner. He sought to establish a basic personality for each culture. After studying the cultural behaviour of different societies Ralph Linton (1945) noted three types of culture viz;

- 1) real culture (actual behaviour)
- 2) Ideal culture (Philosophical and traditional culture)
- 3) Culture construct (what is written on cultural elements etc.)

Real culture is the sum total of behaviour of the members of the society, which are learned and shared in particular situations. A real culture pattern represents a limited range of behaviour within which the response of the members of a society to a particular situation will normally be form. Thus various individuals can behave differently but still in accordance with a real culture pattern.

Ideal culture pattern is formed by philosophical traditions. In this, some traits of culture are regarded as ideals.

Linton stated that there is a difference between the way of life of people and what we study and write about. Both are different dimensions of culture. The former is reality and the latter our understanding of the same. If the former is called culture the latter can be called culture construct. It is an abstraction from the reality which is the actual human behaviour.

While studying different aspects of culture and personality, he suggested some more concepts viz., basic personality, status personality, social inventor etc. regarding basic culture he argued that in a society all the individuals undergo a similar type of socialisation, custom, traditions etc., and therefore, individuals acquire a common set of habits, which may be called a basic personality of the society. He suggested that in a society there are certain individuals, who are granted some special privileges, which lead to form a status personality. Considering social inventor, he argued that in a society some individuals do not follow the old traditional rules and customs of the society, but they try to imitate some other norms, behaviour or mode of living or make certain new discoveries, which are laid down on the society in course of time, and he called such individuals as social inventors. He also discussed (1936) about different types of role, played by an individual in the society. The term role, according to Linton refers to the rules for behaviour appropriate to a given status or social position. This classical definition of role, given by Linton, has been useful in functional analysis within a synchronic frame work. However, he prescribed some criterias to the characteristics as person needs to become eligible for a particular social role. He identified two kinds of status, viz., ascribed and achieved status. According to him ascribed roles usually come by birth. For instance roles based on age, sex, kinship, and caste etc., are ascribed status. Whereas he says some efforts must be made to qualify for an achieved status. For example occupational roles, especially leadership, doctor, engineer, lawyer etc are achieved status.

Abram Kardiner (1891-1981) a student of Sigmund Freud by profession was a psychoanalyst. He along with Ralph Linton argued, that while culture and personality were similarly integrated, a specific casual relationship existed between them.

In response to the configurationalist approach Kardinar, along with Linton developed the concept “basic personality type” in his book, *Psychological Frontiers of Society* (1945). The theory basic personality type is a collection of fundamental personality traits shared by normal members of a society acquired by adapting to a culture. The above theory was formulated after reading Freud’s *The Future of an Illusion* (1928/1961) in which he argues that children’s early life experiences determine their later religious life. Similar to Freud, Kardiner understood that the foundations of personality development were laid in early stage of childhood. Further Kardiner argued that since basic childrearing procedures are common in a society they resulted in some common personality traits among members of a society. He said that the basic personality exists in the context of particular cultural institutions or patterned ways of doing things in a society. Such social institutions are of primary and secondary types. Primary cultural institutions include kinship, childrearing, sexuality and subsistence, which are widely shared by societies. The shared personality traits across the societies are what constitute the basic personality structure. The secondary cultural institutions, on the other hand, include religion, rituals, folkways, norms etc. Between primary and secondary institutions, he poses the basic personality structure. According to him, childhood plays significant role in the formation of basic personality structure. Thus, the basic personality type expresses itself in the group’s ideologies, in emotional and cognitive orientation to life and death. He compared two communities the Tanala, who were horticulturists with the Betsileo, who were intensive cultivators of wet paddy. According to him, the emphasis on secondary institutions like magic and spirit possession among the latter tribe came from the anxiety that demands of irrigated agriculture produced in their basic personality structure. From his study he concluded that diversity in personality types in a culture increased with increased social and political complexity.

Following the Basic Personality Construct of Kardiner, Cora Du Bois also formulated a similar construct which she named ‘Modal Personality’ involving a more statistical concept. Here, the basic personality is expressed in the most frequent type of patterned individual behaviour observed in a society. Du Bois (1903-) was heavily influenced by the work of Abram Kardiner and Ralph Linton. Her experience as an ethnographer and psychologist provided a valuable link in the chain of thought of the culture and personality school. Du Bois modified Kardiner and Linton’s notion of basic personality structure with her modal personality theory. She assumed that a certain personality structure occurs most frequently within a society, but that it is not necessarily common to all members of that society. Modal personality defined as the personality typical of a culturally bounded population, as indicated by the central tendency of a defined frequency distribution.

To develop the concept of modal personality Kardiner gathered data through psychological tests, which include **projective tests** Rorschach, or “ink-blot” test, and the TAT (or Thematic Apperception Test). TAT consists of pictures that the respondents are asked to explain or describe. The above tests combined with observation of frequency of certain behaviours, collection of life histories and dreams, and analysis of oral literature.

Incidentally, Kardiner did not have the kind of data he needed to prove his theory. To overcome this handicap, Cora Du Bois went to Alor Island in the Dutch East Indies where she collected variety of ethnographic and psychological data. When

she returned in 1939 she along with Kardiner analysed the data and arrived at the same conclusions about basic characteristics of Alorese personality. On the basis of this work she proposed 'modal personality' by which she meant the statistically most common personality type. This approach allowed interplay between culture and personality, and provided for variation in personality that exists in any society. This was an improvement upon Kardiner's 'basic personality theory' because of its ability to explain for the variation in personality types within a given culture.

She published the findings of her research on Alor in the year (1945) under the title *The People of Alora: A Social Psychological Study of East Indian Island*. For her research purpose, she spent almost eighteen months on the island of Alor, in eastern Indonesia. Her experiments were of three kinds:

- 1) She collected information on child-rearing;
- 2) She collected eight biographies, each with dream material; and
- 3) She administered a broad range of projective tests –the Rorschach test to thirty-seven subjects, a word-association test to thirty-six subjects, and a drawing test to fifty-five children.

Du Bois broke new ground when she asked specialists in various fields to assess and interpret her projective materials independently. These authorities were given no background briefing on Alorese culture or attitudes; neither were they permitted to see Du Bois' general ethnographies notes or interpretations. Abraham Kardiner was given the life histories, Emil Oberholzer the Rorschachs and Trude Schmidt-Waehner the children's drawings. Working with only these materials, each prepared an evaluation. The effectiveness of the test procedure employed by Du Bois, and her success in eliminating her own emotional or cultural biases, were confirmed by the work of these independent authorities. To a remarkable degree, their findings concurred with hers.

A rather unfavourable modal personality for the Alorese emerged from this many-sided investigation. Alorese of both sexes are described by Du Bois and her colleagues as suspicious and antagonistic, prone to violent and emotional outbursts, often of a jealous nature. They tend to be uninterested in the world around them, slovenly in workmanship, and lacking an interest in goals. Kardiner drew attention to the absence of idealised parental figures in the life stories. Oberholzer noted the lack of capacity for sustained creative effort, indicated by his reading of the Rorschach scores. Schmidt-Waehner identified a lack of imagination and a strong sense of loneliness in the children's drawings.

Turning to the possible causative influences, Du Bois and her co-researchers focused on the experiences of the Alorese during infancy and early childhood, up to the age of six or so. At the root of much of Alorese personality development, they suggested, is the division of labour in that society. Women are the major food suppliers, working daily in the family gardens, while men occupy themselves with commercial affairs, usually the trading of pigs, gongs and kettledrums. Within about two weeks after giving birth, the mother returns to her outdoor work, leaving the infant with the father, a grandparent, or an older sibling. She deprives the newborn child of the comfort of a maternal presence and of breast-feeding for most of the day. The infant thus experiences oral frustration and resultant anxiety. At the same time, the baby suffers bewildering switches in attention, from loving and petting to neglect and bad-tempered rejection. Thus, maternal neglect is viewed as being largely responsible for the Alorese personality.

Activity

Using the different aspects of culture, list as many specific examples as you can how different aspects of culture influence personality development and maintenance.

After 1950s Culture and personality research disseminated among others, by a comparison of several societies' quality of data is improved in the school of thought. For example, one such coordinated research project on child-rearing practices conducted by six teams in different parts of the world like northern India, Mexico, Okinawa, the Philippines, New England, and East Africa. In all the parts the research teams used common field guide and research techniques. They studied about 50 to 100 families randomly in each culture, observing as well as interviewing them about nurturing, self-reliance, responsibility, achievement-orientation, dominance, obedience, aggression, sociability, etc. and ranked the societies on the basis of psychological tones of child rearing, which were then linked with certain cultural traits like presence or absence of warfare (Whiting 1963).

In (1965) Walter Goldschmidt conducted a research project to understand cultural, psychological, and ecological variation among four African groups, vis., the Hehe, Kamba, Pokot, and Sebei. Among the four communities occupation was different, some herded, some cultivated, and others did both. On the other hand Robert Edgerton, the researcher, gathered psychological data from eight different communities with one pastoral and one agricultural for each. He drew a sample of at least 30 adults from each sex and community and interviewed 505 persons. In order to evaluate the personality differences among the communities, he analysed responses to questions, inkblot plates and colour slides. It was thus based on statistical data with objective parameters unlike the earlier (pre-1950s) culture and personality researches based mostly on impressions.

The outcome of the above project is as follows. Kambas had male dominance, fear of poverty and restrained emotions; Hehe were aggressive, formal, mistrusting, and secretive; and other personality traits marked Pokot and Sebei. The latter two groups valued both sons and daughters and prophets; the former two valued just sons, land, and wealth. Economic backgrounds were also found to have important influence on personality: agriculturists consulted sorcerers, took group decisions, valued hard work, were hostile and suspicious, and were able to control their emotions and impulses whereas the pastoralists were individualistic, did not value hard work, were direct, open and realistic.

1.4 CRITICISMS OF CULTURE AND PERSONALITY THEORY

Despite criticisms of their work from various quarters studies of Benedict and Mead are best known and widely read, particularly in introductory courses in Anthropology. The following are the major criticism against the culture and personality school. Both Benedict and Mead assumed culture as given and determining personality but neither of them demonstrated how it happened. They completely disregarded historical analysis. Because Benedict believed that each society had a wide range of cultural options to choose from she did not explain why a society chooses one and not the others. Benedict has been criticised on her studies because of her strong belief that cultures have logical constancy. She has been criticised for saying that Pueblo in her study they did take alcohol during her

fieldwork and they still do. She has been criticised for her statement like ignoring aspects of cooperation among Kwakiutl and strife, suicide and alcoholism among the Zuni cultures. Applying individual personality attributes to characterise whole cultures was also considered to be risky, as was later found from national character studies. Derek Freeman strongly criticised whose findings are completely contradictory to those of Meads. In her Samoan study she found the girls carefree about sexual experimentation whereas Freeman found a strict virginity complex among them. During their studies Mead noticed a free male-female relationship, while he found male-female hostility. The differences occur in their studies because their fieldwork was conducted in different Samoan villages at the time-gap of 15 years.

Prior to Freeman, Marvin Harris has criticised Mead for being too generalised about the emotions of Samoan girls. In her defense she emphasised on the significance of providing clarification rather than demonstration of facts particularly about intangible and psychological aspects of human behaviour.

Morris Opler criticised this configurationalist approach stating that there are not only two bases of cultural integration but many. Thus, this approach is very narrow.

Even in small societies Kardiner's basic personality structure could not explain the variation in personality traits for this reason he has been criticised. Later on the weakness of the theory was taken care of by Du Bois' in modal personality theory.

1.5 SUMMARY

Culture and Personality, sometimes also known as Psychological Anthropology, investigates the role of culture in forming personality in an "ecocultural framework," and considers problems of individual adjustments to demands of culture.

The theory was influenced by and neo-Freudian psychology, which emphasised the primacy of infantile and early childhood experience in shaping the personality. Following the development of this school, many anthropologists attempted to study the national characters (representative personality types) across cultures. In so doing, anthropologists have employed the psychological concepts such as conditioned stimuli and responses, drives, rewards, punishments, conflicts, dreams, ego systems, id impulses, attitudes, values, cognitive orientations, ideas, etc.

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Anthropological Theories-II Sample Questions

- 1) What are the basic principles on which the school of Culture and Personality is based?
- 2) Critically discuss Ruth Benedict's book, 'The Patterns of Culture'.
- 3) What do you understand by National Character? Give examples of studies done on this concept.
- 4) What is basic personality and modal personality? Discuss.
- 5) What are the major points on which the culture and personality school has been criticised?



UNIT 2 MARXISM

Contents

- 2.1 Introduction
 - 2.2 History and Development of Marxism
 - 2.2.1 Marxism as a theory
 - 2.2.1.1 Modes of Production
 - 2.2.1.2 Class and Class Conflict
 - 2.3 Marxist Anthropology – An Overview
 - 2.4 Critical Assessment
 - 2.5 Summary
- References
- Suggested Reading
- Sample Questions

Learning Objectives



This unit would enable you to know:

- the background of Marxism as a theory;
- use of Marxism in anthropological work; and
- critical evaluation of Marxism.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This unit would deal with Marxism as an anthropological theory. We would trace the roots of Marxism how it developed from a theory originally forwarded by Karl Marx (1818-83) one of the greatest intellectuals of the nineteenth century. Marx was widely known as a political activists and his *Communist Manifesto* was one of the most widely circulated political pamphlet known in history. Friedrich Engels worked closely with Karl Marx and contributed to the theories. Marxism as a theory was not rooted in any academic discipline. It had developed as a theory in practice for the labour class. Although it has dealt largely with the sociological, economical and anthropological issues. It entered Anthropology very late as a theory. Initially it was conceived as a sociological theory because the concept of class central to it was seen as a character of urban and western societies only. Anthropology was initially regarded as a subject dealing with classless societies and therefore Marxism was not seen as relevant.

2.2 HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF MARXISM

In order to understand the Marxian ideology and its adaptation by anthropologists we must first understand the philosophy and theory postulated by Karl Marx. The writings of Karl Marx had inspiration from Hegel's work, whose dialectical methodology was used to propagate the theory of social change by Marx. Though an inspiration yet, Hegel came under the spanner of Marx's criticisms, as the

latter's ideas were more inclined as a social and political activist. Before we move into the depths of the theory let's have a quick understanding of Hegel's dialectical ideology.

Hegel had the notion that *thesis* and *antithesis* leads to a *synthesis*, what in other words is understood as the dialectical view of the world. In Hegel's work, human mind is the Creator of the material world, but it gets alienated from it and this mind and material duality is the thesis and antithesis that seeks resolution in unity that can come only from the Spirit or when mind recognises that matter is its own creation and ceases to be controlled by it. This leads to alienation, wherein the mind no longer recognises the matter as its own creation.

Marx's general idea about society is known as his theory of *historical materialism*. It is historical because Marx has traced the evolution of human society from one stage to another. It is called materialistic because Marx has interpreted the evolution of society in terms of its material or economic bases. Marx's major contribution was his view of society; unlike other intellectuals he did not see society as an organism but as a hierarchical structure. The earlier view put forward by Hegel, was that ideas were the cause of change. He supported it by saying "I think therefore I am." On the contrary Marx said 'I am therefore I think.' For Hegel it was consciousness which determine our experiences. His was an ideological approach unlike Marx's materialism. For Marx human being comes first and then comes the ideas. Marx said that the ideas were the result of objective reality. Thus he argued 'if we want to think we need to eat first'.

2.2.1 Marxism as a Theory

Marx's theory basically deals with the contradictions found in the capitalist society of his time. He stated that the most crucial fact is the fact of production. If human being has to live, it has to eat and thus, he argues is the reason one produces. He considered production as a social process. In this system of production human beings enter into relations which are 'independent of their will'. It means these relations existed before the individuals entered into the relations and these would be continued in the future unless they are changed. Herein, let's understand according to Marx what is the base of society and then we would move on to how in this society class and conflict arises.

2.2.1.1 Modes of Production

Karl Marx identified in his theory two components of production in a society that forms its backbone – a) The material component – it consists of the material, thing, resources, capital, technology and so one can call them *means of production* through which production is done. E.g. – land. b) Ownership of means of production – it comprises those who all are working on the resources. These are always social components. It is called *relation of production*. The nature of these relations would vary from society to society.

These two together are called *mode of production* which according to Marx forms the base of economic infrastructure of the society. This economic framework also called as infrastructure supports the structures on which society is founded- the institution of law, politics, and ideology. Marx used the word *superstructure* to define it. For Marx base and superstructure can be identified. A change in the base brings change in the superstructure. Means of production keeps evolving. It changes frequently. Marx defined it in terms of human creativity. As human beings have innovative ideas technologies and other means of production keep on changing. On the other hand the relation of production lags behind. This starts stopping

means of production. This emerges a contradiction between these two. Thus, relation of production has to change keep pace with the means of production. This contradiction brings change to the whole system i.e. superstructure. Marx believed that this kind of contradiction brings dynamicity to the system. Marx applied it to the human society. For him, central to the understanding of society is the mode of production.

Marx developed a generalised history of modes of production from primitive communism to present-day capitalism. Marx's view of a mode of production was that it was made up of the forces of production, which were the technological means by which society produced the goods it wanted, and the relations of production, which specified the relations between people pertaining to both the division of labour and the division of the items produced. As a generalisation, it is possible to say that early in this century there was a tendency to economic and technological determinism on the part of Marxist thinkers. Here the division between base and superstructure in society has been vital. The base is seen to be composed of the economic forces of society: the forces and relations of production. These influence the superstructure of society, made up of the social divisions into kin groups or classes and the ideological apparatus or worldview of the group. Those holding to a strict division between base and superstructure see cause flowing in one direction from the forces of production, such that once one can understand these forces all other elements of society become clear. These views bring them close to those of Leslie White, who saw the energy-processing capacity of society as crucial.

2.2.1.2 Class and Class Conflict

Both Marx and Engels were greatly influenced by Morgan's *Ancient Society* (1877). Morgan had described three stages of human society in an evolutionary sequence- savagery, barbarism and civilisation. Basing on this, Engels defined *primitive communism*. Morgan had described savagery and barbarism of having total equality. Primitive communism was derived from this concept that the society in the primitive time had total equality. Engels defines that in primitive communism there is no man and man contradiction. Marx and Engels accepted the egalitarian concept for tribal societies. This concept was more or less imaginary. It served the purpose that human society was not a class ridden society in the beginning rather it was class free. It means that human society can come to an equal stage in times to come.

It was developed in an evolutionary manner by both Marx and Engels. In ancient human society there was no man and man contradiction but man and nature contradiction was there. They argued that for this, there was a need to control nature. Gradually improvisation of technique took place to control nature. Not all the people at a time, but some people were able to discover these techniques and they were able to have control over some lands. Two stages emerged in the society – the people who had the technologies and the others who had not the technologies and became dependent upon the first type. Those who had the technological advantages took others under them. From here comes two categories of people – the masters and the slaves. Masters had the control over resources and the slaves could not. Slavery evolved into feudalism where the dominant mode of production was agriculture. Again two groups emerged- lords and the vessels. Then comes the stage where factory was founded and production became more and more technologically oriented. This is the capitalist mode of production. Again two groups of people came into existence – the capitalists and the bourgeois.

PRIMITIVE COMMUNISM

SLAVERY	MASTER-SLAVE (UN free to sell labour)
BARBARISM	LORD-VESSEL (relatively un-free)
CAPITALISM	CAPITALISTS-PROLITERIATES (free)
COMMUNISM	

As we move downward the class becomes free to sell labour. This dual class structure was derived by Marx. Marx identified basically two classes- the class who own the production and the other who operate upon the production. The change from savagery to barbarism indicates the change in mode of production. In these stages also class conflict was there, but the kind of class conflict that according to Marx would lead to communism dwell in the capitalist society.

Herein, the key concept is Marx’s definition of class, defined in terms of ownership of property. Such ownership vests a person with the power to exclude others from the property and to use it for personal purposes. In relation to property, Marx’s had divided the society into three categories: the bourgeoisie class (who own the means of production such as machinery and factory buildings, and whose source of income is profit), landowners (whose income is rent), and the proletariat class (who own their labour and sell it for a wage). According to Marx, the proletariat class is always looked down by the bourgeoisie class and the fruits of labour are not rightly distributed among the proletariat class. This leads to a class conflict beings and one day it would reach its pinnacle and the whole structure would fall leading to a new type of economy and government.

Reflection: Dialectical Logic of Karl Marx

Karl Marx a positivist with a scientific vision uses Hegel’s dialectical theory to create a materialistic history where economic forces and relations create contradictions that move the system forward. The society as conceived by Karl Marx in a Capitalist economy has two classes- the *bourgeoisie* (the ruling class- the haves) and the *proletariat* class (the working class- the have not’s). Marx stated that in such a society there is a gap between the two classes and as the gap widens- the rich becoming richer by exploiting the labour class and the latter becoming poorer that alienation comes into play. The exploitation passing through the various stages reaches the Utopian wherein all ceases to exist and it would be the end of history.

Later on Marx’s theory faced criticism because of its futuristic aspect. The prediction that the present capitalist society would change with a revolution and finally it will bring equality has not been fulfilled. Capitalism continued, as the revolution came to the feudalistic society but not to the capitalistic society. Scholars argued at one point that Marxists is one method along with other methods. Moreover, time and again in history it has been noted that the Capitalist economy has rebounded. It neither died away nor did it change to a new system, as in the case of the Great Depression in the early 1930’s, whereas the fall of the USSR a Socialists economy was a setback to the predictions of Marx’s theory.

As stated above the theory of Marx was denounced by his contemporaries and it was only in the 20th century that it was revived and scholars from various fields started using the concept in their fields. Thus, the works based on Marx’s ideology is known as Marxism. In the next section we would see how Marxian ideas were applied by Anthropologists.

2.3 MARXIST ANTHROPOLOGY – AN OVERVIEW

In the theoretical field, Marxism has faced many criticisms. The main criticism that centers on this theory is about its futuristic attitude towards human society. Marx extensively dealt with his concern about how capitalist society would change and how communism would take place. To satisfy this Marx described certain stages of human society and showed how communism would take place gradually. Along with this, Marxism greatly dealt with the issue of equality. Marx vigorously talked about the equality for all. It is amazing how little academic influence it had in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the west (in areas like Russia, influence was crucial and early). This general lack of influence also makes more striking the Marxist thought of Gordon Childe, the only major figure in Anthropology in the English-speaking world to be a self-professed Marxist. The relative poverty of writings by both Marx and Engels on anthropological topics, in terms of both their numbers and scope, has left Marxist anthropologists and archaeologists with a series of basic principles pertaining to the process of labour and the social and ideological relations resulting from that process, but little in the way of specific models to apply to non-capitalist societies. Also, over the century since Marx died there have been subtle currents within Marxist thought which have subjected principles drawn from Marx to constant criticism and revision. We can artificially separate two elements of Marx's thought which have been influential in anthropology in different ways: his general philosophical approach and his historical scheme of social change.

The interface of anthropology and Marxism begins with structuralism, as the theorists of the late sixties and early seventies denounced classical functionalism as inadequate; unable to explain the social realities such as imperialism and exploitation, with reference to colonial anthropology. As mentioned Morgan's *Ancient Society* had inspired Marx and Engels, but Terray examines Morgan in the framework of Althusser's over determination. Morgan had put forward several germs of thought, in the form of Idea of Property, Idea of family, Idea of Governance and the Modes of subsistence. His ethnical periods are not arbitrary or unconnected evolution of these ideas, like Tylor's version of evolution, but a coming together of stages of these institutions, where they are compatible with each other. In a similar tone to Althusser's over determination, the compatibility /incompatibilities are measured against the modes of subsistence. Thus a particular form of family, a particular form of government and a particular form of property are brought together in an ethnical period provided they are also compatible with the Mode of subsistence in that period. Thus according to Terrey, we can look upon Morgan as the father of structuralism, as the Ethnical periods have an internal structure of logical compatibility.

However the application of a classical Marxist model to the kind of societies studied by anthropologists proved problematic as is evident from the debate surrounding the concept of Lineage Mode of Production, favoured by some hard core Marxist scholars like Terray. According to some lineages may be seen as ruled by elders who exploit the labour of the young men for their political gains. But ethnographic examples do not always show that elders get brides for themselves, with the bride price created by the labour of the young men and that are later passed on to the young men. In most lineage societies with few exceptions the elders get the brides for the young men and are managers rather than usurpers of wealth. Almost all tribal societies work on the basis of rights of user rather than

rights of possession and the elders are seen as guardians and trustees and not owners, so they cannot be equated with the Bourgeoisie of the capitalist societies. Moreover we cannot say that the older and younger generations are classes in any true sense of the word; as the classes are closed entities and the generations are not; everyone who is young at one point of time has a chance of growing into an elder.

Yet structuralism and Marxism were seen as analogous especially by the school of French structuralists such as Maurice Godelier and Claude Meillasoux. Like Marxism, structuralism also believed that the surface appearance of things or the evident social world had an underlying deeper level of reality that was a logical structure capable of explaining the overlying varieties of factual data by a single logical schema. Thus for Marx the variations of history were explainable by the structural principle of contradictions and a dialectical mechanism of social transformation; thus no matter how diverse the apparent phenomenon, the underlying structural possibilities are limited. This was in direct contradiction to the empiricist methods of British social anthropology that assumed the factual reality to be the social structure. Marxism is a nomothetic as against an ideographic theory. It has a high level of generalisation and abstraction and a scientific endeavour to look for underlying logical structures. Levi-Strauss comes close to this form of analysis except that he is more interested in the abstract symbolic world of myths and representations than the realm of the political and the economic.

The French structuralist school or what may be called as the New Economic Anthropology is based quite solidly on Marxist interpretations. Maurice Godelier, one of the leading intellectuals of this school tried to resolve the issue of applying a Marxist model to a non-capitalist society. According to him it is not the form of the institution that is important but rather its function so that it is not necessary that anthropologists go looking for the economic and the political as institutions where they do not exist. Rather, in those societies, where these institutions are not autonomous the existing institutions such as kinship and religion themselves act as economic and ideological aspects of society. Thus kinship for example will act as both infrastructure and as super structure, provided we look towards the way kinship functions. These he calls as the 'inner' and 'outer' relations.

For example caste has an economic dimension such as providing for a societal division of labour, a systematic exchange of resources and labour, property relations and distribution and control of resources that act as a infrastructure. At the same time it has a ritual and mythical dimension that is the super structure; thus the same institution has the structural possibility of acting as both infrastructure and super structure. In a similar fashion we have Claude Meillasoux's classic work, *Maidens, Meals and Money*, where he gives a Marxist interpretation of both hunting, food gathering and shifting cultivation showing how they differ from the agricultural societies. His analysis of kinship is thus based on the economic aspect of kinship and according to Meillasoux, where kinship has apparently very little to contribute to economy, like in the band societies that have as their productive unit a largely fluid organisation, namely the band, whose membership varies over time and space in accordance with the environmental needs. More importantly the productive cycle is very short, and whatever is brought into the camp is consumed in a very short time (also for lack of storage technology). In this kind of economy each band is largely independent of the earlier generations and other relationships. Since there is no continuity of productive cycle the value of kinship is very little and he calls them "pre-kinship" societies as they have little structural representation of kinship ties like family and lineage. The collective identity of the band is more

important than individual parentage and thus the family ties too are weak. Immediate sharing and cooperation rather than long term or delayed consumption is the norm. The children belong more to the community than to the individual parents. Thus Meillasoux constructed a historical materialist schema of pre-capitalist or domestic economies.

A very important contribution of Marxism was to show that institutions or societies are not created as it is; there are logical connections between the material conditions and the historical circumstances that gave rise to them. A particularly critical point of view was developed with respect to imperialism and colonisation and the deliberate ignoring of conflict and war by the functionalists. For example George Balandier, in his book *Political Anthropology* has criticised Evans-Pritchard and Meyer Fortes for their designation of some societies as acephalous or stateless, saying that many of these societies so designated were actually flourishing kingdoms that became depopulated and dispersed under the colonial aggression. In fact the entire notion of static, ageless societies has been critically appraised by Eric Wolf, in his book, *Europe and the People without History*. The introduction of history into anthropology was largely attributed to Marxism and so was the incorporation of conflict and disruption as part of an ethnography.

While British anthropology with few exceptions like Peter Worsley and Max Gluckmann, had largely avoided Marxism or any reference to it, till quite late, American Anthropology had shown the influence of Marxism, from the early twentieth century without always explicit acknowledgment. Thus Leslie White and Julian Steward, both neo-evolutionists had turned obviously to the techno-economic dimensions of society as causative of social evolution. While White talks of Energy and evolution also giving more determining role to the subsistence dimension of culture; Steward reformulated the concept of culture to make it look more like a Marxist model of society. His Core culture, with its direct relationship to environment and comprising the techno-economic dimensions of society has been given a determining role in evolution, with the peripheral culture playing a more passive role and resembling the super structure. Since both White and Steward were talking of culture rather than social systems, they make no direct connection to Marxism, yet the influence of dialectical materialism and a hierarchical structure of culture with a techno-economic determinism is found in both theories. Although Sahlins emerges as a strong critic of Leslie White and his technological determinism, yet he too forms a strong critical appraisal of capitalism in his description of what he calls as a Domestic Mode of Production.

In fact while White is more inclined towards a materialist version of Marxism, Sahlins is more inclined towards the Philosophical dimensions, emphasising the dehumanisation brought about by capitalism and the alienation of a materialist world view as propagated by modernity.

2.4 CRITICALASSESSMENT

Like any other theory Marxism has also certain criticism. The basic points are discussed below:

- 1) Marx's theory overtly concentrated on 'economic relationships' leading to a number of criticisms:
 - a) Marxism over-emphasis the importance of economic relationships and suggests that this economic relationships determine all other relationships (family, education, friendship, religious and so forth).

- b) Marxists tend to overlook other forms of (non-economic) conflict or tries to explain these conflicts as ultimately having economic roots. Radical feminists, for example, argue that the roots of male - female conflict are not simply economic (to do with social class) but patriarchal. Marxism – both old and modern - has ignored the role and position of women in society.
- 2) The subjective interpretations of individuals are under-emphasised when looking at the way in which people see and act in the social world. A person's subjective interpretation of their class, for example, might be quite different to their objective class position.
- 3) Capitalism, as an economic and political system, has proven to be more durable and flexible than Marx maintained. In modern social systems, for example, the advent of Communism does not appear imminent.

2.5 SUMMARY

In this unit the students have been acquainted with the basic tenets of Marxism and how it has influenced anthropological theories and practices. The concept of materialism derived from Marxists thoughts have given impetus to many of the anthropological works and also in many areas of intellectual thinking. The focus on history and consideration of social change as inherent aspect of society, recognition of exploitation, conflict and protest, the assessment of role governance and economy have all lent a rich nuanced depth to anthropological writings in the present century.

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Suggested Reading

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Sample Questions

- 1) State how Marxism developed as a theory.
- 2) Elucidate the contribution of Marxism in anthropological arena.

UNIT 3 STRUCTURALISM

Contents

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Claude Levi-Strauss: His Life and Works
- 3.3 The Example of Totemism
 - 3.3.1 The Method
 - 3.3.2 The Analysis
 - 3.3.3 Summary of the Study of Totemism
- 3.4 Final Comments
 - References
 - Suggested Reading
 - Sample Questions

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Structuralism is the name given to a method of analysing social relations and cultural products, which came into existence in the 1950s. Although it had its origin in linguistics, particularly from the work of Ferdinand de Saussure, it acquired popularity in anthropology, from where it impacted the other disciplines in social sciences and humanities. It gives primacy to pattern over substance. The meaning of a particular phenomenon or system comes through knowing how things fit together, and not from understanding things in isolation. A characteristic that structuralism and structural-functional approach share in common is that both are concerned with relations between things.

However, there are certain dissimilarities between the two. Structural-functional approach is interested in finding order within social relations. Structuralism, on the other hand, endeavours to find the structures of thought and the structure of society. Structural-functional approach follows inductive reasoning; from the particular, it moves to the general. Structuralism subscribes to deductive logic. It begins with certain premises. They are followed carefully to the point they lead to. Aspects from geometry and algebra are kept in mind while working with structuralism. For structuralism, logical possibilities are worked out first and then it is seen, how reality fits. For true structuralists, there is no reality except the relations between things.

3.2 CLAUDE LEVI-STRAUSS: HIS LIFE AND WORKS

Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908-2009) is often described as the ‘last French intellectual giant’, the ‘founder of structuralism in anthropology’, and the ‘father of modern anthropology’. Born on 28 November 1908 in Belgium, he was one of the greatest social anthropologists of the twentieth century, ruling the intellectual circles from the 1950s to the 1980s, after which the popularity of his method (known as structuralism) depressed with new approaches and paradigms taking its place, but he never went to the backseat. Even when structuralism did not have many admirers, it was taught in courses of sociology and anthropology and the author whose work

was singularly attended to was none other than Lévi-Strauss. Each year he was read by scholars from anthropology and the other disciplines with new insights and renewed interest, since he was one of the few anthropologists whose popularity spread beyond the confines of social anthropology. He was (and is) read avidly in literature. Although he did not do, at one time, it was thought that every social fact, and every product of human activity and mind, of any society, simple or complex, could be analysed following the method that Lévi-Strauss had proposed and defended.

In 1935, Lévi-Strauss got an appointment at the University of São Paulo to teach sociology. His stay in Brazil exposed him to the ‘anthropological other’. He had already read Robert Lowie’s *Primitive Society* and formed a conception of how anthropological studies were to be carried out. Lévi-Strauss said: “I had gone to Brazil because I wanted to become an anthropologist. And I had been attracted to an anthropology very different from that of Durkheim, who was not a fieldworker, while I was learning about fieldwork through the English and the Americans.” During the first year of his stay in the University, he started ethnographic projects with his students, working on the folklore of the surrounding areas of São Paulo. He then went to the Mato Grosso among the Caduveo and Bororo tribes; he described his first fieldwork in the following words: “I was in a state of intense intellectual excitement. I felt I was reliving the adventures of the first sixteenth century explorers. I was discovering the New World for myself. Everything seemed mythical; the scenery, the plants, the animals...”

From his field stay with the Caduveo, he brought decorated pottery and hides painted with motifs, and from Bororo, the ornaments made of feathers, animal teeth and claws. Some of the exhibits that he had brought were, in his words, ‘truly spectacular’. He put up an exhibition of these objects in 1936, on the basis of which he got a grant from Musée de L’Homme (which later became Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique) to carry out a field expedition to the Nambikwara.

A big article that Lévi-Strauss wrote on the Bororo (which appeared in the *Journal de la Société des Américanistes*) attracted the attention of Robert Lowie, who invited him to the New School of Social Research to take up a teaching assignment. Lévi-Strauss’s stay in New York was extremely fruitful. He had a chance to look at the rich material that the American anthropologists had collected on the Indian communities. He went about analysing it, but at the same time carried several short first-hand field studies, although they were not of the same league as was the masterly fieldwork that Bronislaw Malinowski had carried out among the Trobriand Islanders. However, whatever fieldwork he carried out, he thought, was enough to give him an insight into the ‘other’. He saw himself as an analyst and a synthesizer of the material that had already been collected. Since his aim was to understand the working of the human mind, he wanted to have a look at the ethnographic facts and the material cultural objects from different cultural contexts. In other words, Lévi-Strauss was not interested in producing a text (i.e., a monograph) on a particular culture, but a text that addressed the understanding of the ‘Universal Man’ rather than the ‘particular man’.

At the Ecole Libre des Hautes Etudes, where Lévi-Strauss had taken up teaching responsibilities, Alexandre Koyré introduced him to the founder of the Prague School of Linguistics, Roman Jakobson. This relationship with Jakobson developed into a ‘friendship of forty years without a break’; it was in the words of Lévi-Strauss, ‘the beginning of a brotherly friendship.’ This friendship also introduced

Lévi-Strauss to structuralism. Before that he said that he was a “kind of naïve structuralist, a structuralist without knowing it.” Jacobson introduced him to the methodology of structuralism as it had been formed in the discipline of linguistics. Incidentally, Jacobson also attended Lévi-Strauss’s lectures on kinship and advised him to write about it. Inspired by Jacobson, Lévi-Strauss started writing *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* in 1943 and finished it in 1947.

This work offered a new approach to the study of kinship systems that has come to be known as ‘alliance theory’ in opposition to what is called ‘descent theory’, which was put forth by British anthropologists (such as A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, Meyer Fortes) and was the dominant theory in kinship studies till then. The emphasis of descent theory was on the transmission of property, office, ritual complex, and rights and obligations across the generations (either in the father’s or mother’s line, or in both the lines), which produced solidarity among the members of the group related by the ties of consanguinity. Lineage was seen as a corporate group, property-holding and organising labour on the lines of blood ties. In this set of ideas, marriage was secondary: since one could not marry one’s sister or daughter, because of the rule of incest taboo, one married a woman from another group. The primary objective of marriage was the procreation of the descent group.

Lévi-Strauss’s alliance theory brought marriage to the centre. The function of marriage was not just procreative. It was far more important, for it led to the building of a string of relations between groups, respectively called the ‘wife-givers’ and ‘wife-takers’. In this context, the concept of incest taboo acquires a central place. It is the ‘pre-social’ social fact; if society is a social fact, which explains and accounts for a number of other social facts, the fact that explains society, its emergence and functioning, is incest taboo. For Lévi-Strauss, it is the ‘cornerstone’ of human society. The logical outcome of the prohibition of incest is a system of exchange. It is not only the negative aspect of the rule of incest taboo that needs to be recognised, as was the case with the descent theorists. What was significant to Lévi-Strauss was the positive aspect – it is not only that I do not marry my sister but I also give her in marriage to another man whose sister I then marry. ‘Sister exchange’ creates a ‘federation’ between exchanging groups. Societies are also distinguished with respect to where there is a ‘positive rule of marriage’ (the genealogical specification of the relative to whom one should marry) and where such a rule does not exist.

Lévi-Strauss’s work on kinship, the English translation of which was only available in 1969, twenty years after its publication in French, introduced a new approach to the study of kinship and exchange. That marriage is an ‘exchange of women’ – where women are a ‘value’ as well as a ‘sign’ – and groups are perpetually linked by cycles of reciprocity, was a fresh way of looking at systems of kinship. Although there were acrimonious debates between the descent and alliance theories (particularly those British anthropologists who subscribed to alliance theory), there was no doubt that Lévi-Strauss’s *Elementary Structures* acquired the reputation of a work without which no study of kinship and marriage was ever complete. And, even after sixty years of its publication, it is still read with profit. Lévi-Strauss had planned to write a second volume on complex structures of kinship, where the positive rule of marriage did not exist, but he could never do so, as his attention shifted to the study and analysis of myths.

In 1958 came a collection of his essays, in which he had made use of the methodology of structuralism, called *Anthropologie Structurale*, the English

translation of which under the title *Structural Anthropology* appeared in 1963. This volume also carried his famous essay on the concept of social structure (which was published in *Anthropology Today* edited by A.L. Kroeber), wherein he had argued that ‘social structure is a model’ rather than an empirical entity and a ‘province of inquiry’ as was the view of Radcliffe-Brown.

In 1962 came his *Le Totémisme (The Totemism)* and *La Pensée Sauvage (The Savage Mind)*. Both these books marked a shift in his interest from the study of kinship to that of religion. In *The Totemism*, which we shall discuss below as an example of the application of the structural method, he tried to lay the ‘problem of totemism to rest’ once and forever, arguing that totems were modes of classification; they were ‘good to think’ rather than ‘good to eat’. The binary opposition of nature and culture that evolved in his kinship study was further developed here. Rejecting the utilitarian theory of totemism, Lévi-Strauss examined the merits of the second theory of totemism that Radcliffe-Brown had proposed. In *The Savage Mind*, dedicated to the memory of Merleau-Ponty, Lévi-Strauss’s central point was that the thoughts of the ‘primitive people’ were in no way inferior to those of the ‘Westerners’.

Between 1964 and 1971 were published Lévi-Strauss’s *magnum opus*, the four volume *Mythologiques* series. In total, these volumes, running into two thousand pages, analyse 813 myths and their more than one thousand versions. *The Raw and the Cooked* analyses myths from South America, particularly central and eastern Brazil. The second volume, *From Honey to Ashes* is also concerned with South America, but deals with myths both from the south and the north. *The Origin of Table Manners* begins with a myth that is South American, but from further north. The final volume, *The Naked Man*, is entirely North American. The interesting fact Lévi-Strauss finds is that the “most apparent similarities between myths are found between the regions of the New World that are geographically most distant.” Beginning with the mythology of central Brazil and then moving out to other geographical areas, and then returning to Brazil, Lévi-Strauss realises that “depending upon the case, the myths of neighbouring peoples coincide, partially overlap, answer, or contradict one another.” Thus, the analysis of each myth ‘implied that of others’. Taken as the centre, the myth ‘radiates variants around it.’ It spreads from one neighbour to another in ‘several directions at once.’ His book, *The Jealous Potter*, was also a part of the series on the analysis of myths. The important fact here is that in spite of his widely acclaimed volumes on mythology, Lévi-Strauss thought that the science of myths was in its infancy. *Histoire de Lynx* (1991) and *Regarder, Écouter, Lire* (1993), which discuss his aesthetic and intellectual interests, were his last works.

In one of the courses Lévi-Strauss taught at the Collège de France, he asked questions pertaining to the future of anthropology. Although the traditional societies with which anthropology is concerned are fast changing – some are disappearing as well – anthropologists have done a commendable work of recording as meticulously as possible the life styles and thought patterns of these people. Lévi-Strauss thought that anthropology was not an ‘endangered science’; however, its character would be transformed in future. Perhaps, it would not be an ‘object of fieldwork’. Anthropologists would become philologists, historians of ideas, and specialists in civilisations, and they would then work with the help of the documents that the earlier observers had prepared. Regarding his own work, Lévi-Strauss said that it ‘signaled a moment in anthropological thought’ and he would be remembered for that.

Anthropological Theories-II For Lévi-Strauss, structuralism implies a search for deep, invisible, and innate structures universal to humankind. These unapparent and hidden structures manifest in surface (and conscious) behaviour that varies from one culture to the other. Conscious structures are a ‘misnomer’. Therefore, we have to discover the underlying ‘unconscious’ structures, and how they are transformed into ‘conscious’ structures.

Lévi-Strauss created a stir in anthropology. Some scholars set aside their own line of enquiry for the time being to experiment with his method, whereas the others reacted more critically to his ideas. But nowhere was his impact total and complete – he could not create an ‘academic lineage’. His idea of ‘universal structures’ of human mind has been labeled by some as his ‘cosmic ambition’, generalising about human society as a whole. While British anthropologists (especially Edmund Leach, Rodney Needham) in the 1950s and 1960s were impressed with Lévi-Strauss, they were not in agreement with his abstract search for universal patterns. They tended to apply structuralism at a ‘micro’ (or ‘regional’) level. Another example is of the work of Louis Dumont, a student of Marcel Mauss, who in his work *Homo Hierarchicus* (1967) presented a regional-structural understanding of social hierarchy in India. The approach of applying structural methodology at a micro level is known as ‘neo-structuralism’.

3.3 THE EXAMPLE OF TOTEMISM

Lévi-Strauss’s *Totemism*, as mentioned earlier, was published in French in 1962. A year later came its English translation, done by an Oxford anthropologist, Rodney Needham, and it carried more than fifty pages of Introduction written by Roger C. Poole. In appreciation of this book, Poole (p. 9) wrote:

In *Totemism* Lévi-Strauss takes up an old and hoary anthropological problem, and gives it such a radical treatment that when we lay down the book we have to look at the world with new eyes.

Before we proceed with Lévi-Strauss’s analysis, let us firstly understand the meaning of totemism.

Totemism refers to an institution, mostly found among the tribal community, where the members of each of its clans consider themselves as having descended from a plant, or animal, or any other animate or inanimate object, for which they have a special feeling of veneration, which leads to the formation of a ritual relationship with that object. The plant, animal, or any other object is called ‘totem’; the word ‘totem’, Lévi-Strauss says (p. 86), is taken from the Ojibwa, an Algonquin language of the region to the north of the Great Lakes of Northern America. The members who share the same totem constitute a ‘totemic group’. People have a special reverential attitude towards their totem – they abstain from killing and/or eating it, or they may sacrifice and eat it on ceremonial occasions; death of the totem may be ritually mourned; grand celebrations take place in some societies for the multiplication of totems; and totems may be approached for showering blessings and granting long term welfare. In other words, the totem becomes the centre of beliefs and ritual action.

Lévi-Strauss does not believe in the ‘reality’ of totemism. He says that totemism was ‘invented’ and became one of the most favourite anthropological subjects to be investigated with an aim to find its origins and varieties, with the Victorian scholars in the second half of the nineteenth century. By contrast, Lévi-Strauss’s

study is not of totemism; it is of *totemic phenomena*. In other words, it is an ‘adjectival study’, and not a ‘substantive study’, which means that it is a ‘study of the phenomena that happen to be totemic’ rather than ‘what is contained in or what is the substance of totemism’. At his command, Lévi-Strauss has the same data that were available to his predecessors, but the question he asks is entirely new. He does not ask the same question that had been repeatedly asked earlier by several scholars, *vis.* ‘What is totemism?’ His question is ‘How are totemic phenomena arranged?’ The move from ‘what’ to ‘how’ was radical at that time (during the 1960s); and Lévi-Strauss’s interpretation of totemism was a distinct break with the earlier analyses of totemism (whether they were evolutionary, or diffusionistic, or functional). It is because of this distinctiveness that Poole (p. 9) writes that with Lévi-Strauss, “the ‘problem’ of totemism has been laid to rest once and for all.”

Lévi-Strauss offers a critique of the explanations that had been (and were) in vogue at that time. Firstly, he rejects the thesis that the members of the American school (Franz Boas, Robert Lowie, A.L. Kroeber) put forth, according to which the totemic phenomena are not a reality *sui generis*. In other words, totemism does not have its own existence and laws; rather it is a product of the general tendency among the ‘primitives’ to identify individuals and social groups with animal and plant worlds. Lévi-Strauss finds this explanation highly simplistic. He also criticises the functional views of totemism; for instance, Durkheim’s explanation that totemism binds people in a ‘moral community’ called the church, or Malinowski’s idea that the Trobrianders have totems because they are of utilitarian value, for they provide food to people. Malinowski’s explanation (which Lévi-Strauss sums up in words like ‘totems are good to eat’) lacks universality, since there are societies that have totems of non-utilitarian value, and it would be difficult to find the needs that the totem fulfils. Durkheim’s thesis of religion as promoting social solidarity may be applicable in societies each with a single religion, but not societies with religious pluralism. Moreover, the functional theory is concerned with the contribution an institution makes towards the maintenance of the whole society, rather than how it is arranged. In other words, the functional theory of totemism deals with the contribution the beliefs and practices of totemism make to the maintenance and well-being of society rather than what is the structure of totemism, and how it is a product of human mind.

3.3.1 The Method

Lévi-Strauss’s *Totemism* is principally an exercise in methodology. He does not look for the unity of the phenomenon of totemism; rather, he breaks it down into various visual and intellectual codes. He does not intend to explain totemism, rather he deciphers it – its arrangement. In the first chapter of his book (p. 84), Lévi-Strauss summarises his methodological programme, which is as follows:

- 1) Define the phenomenon under study as a relation between two or more terms, real or supposed;
- 2) construct a table of possible permutations between these terms;
- 3) take this table as the general object of analysis which, at this level only, can yield necessary connections, the empirical phenomenon considered at the beginning being only one possible combination among others, the complete system of which must be reconstructed beforehand.

We may give here a simple example to understand this from the realm of kinship. Descent, for instance, can be traced from the father or the mother. Let us call the descent traced from the father ‘p’, and the mother ‘q’. Now, let us assign them their respective values: if the side (whether the father’s or the mother’s) is recognised, we denote it by 1, and if it is not recognised, it is denoted as 0. Now, we can construct the table of the possible permutations: where (1) p is 1, and q is 0; (2) p is 0, and q is 1; (3) p is 1, and q is 1; and (4) p is 0 and q is 0. The first permutation yields the patrilineal society, the second, matrilineal, the third, bilineal, and the last possibility does not exist empirically.

Let us now move to how Lévi-Strauss applies this to totemism. He says that totemism covers relations between things falling in two series – one natural (animals, plants) and the other cultural (persons, clans). For Lévi-Strauss, the ‘problem’ of totemism arises when two separate chains of experience (one of nature and the other of culture) are confused. Human beings identify themselves with nature in a myriad of ways, and the other thing is that they describe their social groups by names drawn from the world of animals and plants. These two experiences are different, but totemism results when there is any kind of overlap between these orders. Further, Lévi-Strauss writes: ‘The natural series comprises on the one hand *categories*, on the other *particulars*; the cultural series comprises *groups* and *persons*.’ He chooses these terms rather arbitrarily to distinguish, in each series, two modes of existence – collective and individual – and also, to keep these series distinct. Lévi-Strauss says that any terms could be used provided they are distinct.

NATURE	Category	Particular
CULTURE	Group	Person

These two sets of terms can be associated in four ways, as is the case with the example given earlier.

	1	2	3	4
NATURE	Category	Category	Particular	Particular
CULTURE	Group	Person	Person	Group

Totemism thus establishes a relationship between human beings (culture) and nature, and, as shown above, this relationship can be divided into four types, and we can find empirical examples of each one of them.

Lévi-Strauss says that the example of the first is the Australian totemism (‘sex totems’ and ‘social totems’) that postulates a relationship between a natural category and a cultural group. The example of the second is the ‘individual’ totemism of the North American Indians. Among them, an individual reconciles himself with a natural category. For an example of the third combination, Lévi-Strauss takes the case of the Mota (in the Banks Islands) where a child is thought to be the ‘incarnation of an animal or plant found or eaten by the mother when she first became aware that she was pregnant’ (p. 85), or what has come to be known as ‘incarnational totemism’. Another example of this category may come from certain tribes of the Algonquin group, who believe that a special relation is established between the newborn child and whichever animal is seen to approach the family cabin. The fourth combination (group-particular combination) may be exemplified with cases from tribes of Polynesia and Africa, where certain animals (such as garden lizards in New Zealand, sacred crocodiles and lions and leopards in Africa) are protected and venerated (the sacred animal totemism).

The four combinations are equivalent. It is because they result from the same operation (i.e., the permutation of the elements that comprise a phenomenon). But, in the anthropological literature that Lévi-Strauss examines, it is only the first two that have been included in the domain of totemism, while the other two have only been related to totemism in an indirect way. Some authors have not considered the last two variants of totemism in their discussion. Here, Lévi-Strauss observes that the ‘problem of totemism’ (or what is called the ‘totemic illusion’) results from the ‘distortion of a semantic field to which belong phenomena of the same type.’ The outcome of this is that certain aspects (or the first and second types of totemic phenomena) have been singled out at the expense of others (the third and fourth types), which gives an impression of ‘originality’ and ‘strangeness’ that they do not in reality possess.

3.3.2 The Analysis

The fourth chapter of Lévi-Strauss’s *Totemism*, titled ‘Towards the Intellect’, presents the work of Raymond Firth, Mayer Fortes, Edward Evans-Pritchard, and the second theory of totemism (of 1951) that Alfred Radcliffe-Brown gave, as containing the germs of a correct interpretation of totemic phenomenon making possible a fully adequate explanation of its content and form. Radcliffe-Brown’s first theory of totemism was utilitarian and culture-specific, quite like Malinowski’s theory. By comparison, Firth and Fortes do not succumb to an arbitrary explanation or to any factitious evidence. Both of them think that the relationship between totemic systems and natural species is based on a perception of resemblance between them. In Fortes’s work on the Tallensi, animals and ancestors resemble each other. Animals are apt symbols for the livingness of ancestors. Fortes shows that among the Tallensi, animals symbolise the potential aggressiveness of ancestors.

Lévi-Strauss applauds the attempt of Firth and Fortes, for they move from a point of view centred on subjective utility (the utilitarian hypothesis) to one of objective analogy. But Lévi-Strauss goes further than this: he says ‘it is not the resemblances, but the differences, which resemble each other’ (p. 149). In totemism, the resemblance is between the two systems of differences. Let us understand its meaning with the help of an example: the relationship between two clans is like the relationship between two animals, or two birds, or an animal and a bird. It is the difference between the two series that resembles each other.

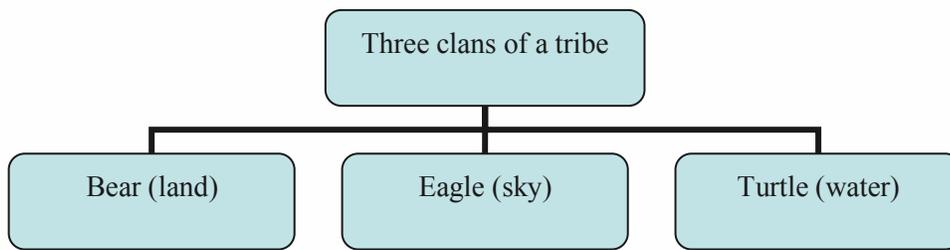
Undoubtedly, Firth and Fortes make a good beginning in interpreting totemism. But we have to move from external analogy (the external resemblance) to internal homology (the identity at the internal level). For Lévi-Strauss, it is Evans-Pritchard’s analysis of Nuer religion that allows us to move from the external resemblance to internal homology. Among the Nuer, the twins are regarded as ‘birds’, not because they are confused with birds or look like them. It is because, the twins, in relation to other persons, are ‘persons of the above’ in relation to ‘persons from below’. And, with respect to birds, they are ‘birds of below’ in relation to ‘birds from above’. The relationship between twins and other men is like the relationship that is deemed to exist between the ‘birds of below’ and the ‘birds of above’. It is a good example of the ‘differences which resemble each other’ in the ‘two systems of differences’. If the statement – or the code – ‘twins are birds’ directs us to look for some external image, then we are surely bound to be led astray. But if we look into the internal homology in the Nuer system, then we will be closer to the understanding of the code.

At this level, Lévi-Strauss introduces the second theory of Radcliffe-Brown that has taken a decisive and innovatory step in interpreting totemism. Instead of asking, 'Why all these birds?', Radcliffe-Brown asks: 'Why particularly eagle-hawk and crow, and other pairs?' Lévi-Strauss considers this question as marking the beginning of a genuine structural analysis. In fact, Radcliffe-Brown observes in this analysis of totemism that the kind of structure with which we are concerned is the 'union of opposites.'

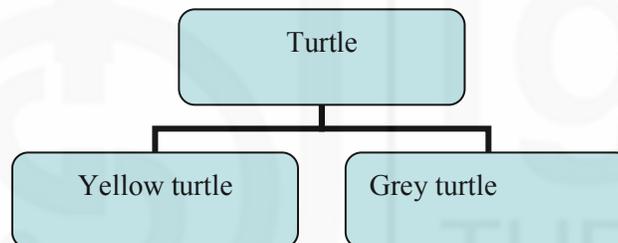
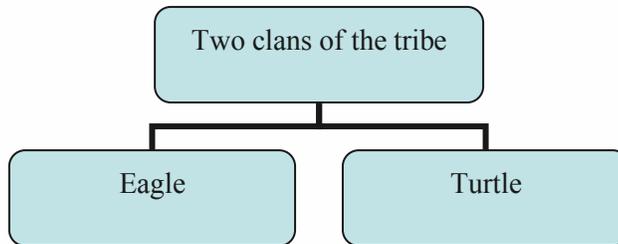
Evans-Pritchard and Radcliffe-Brown, thus, recognise two principles of interpretation which Lévi-Strauss deems fundamental. In his analysis of Nuer religion, Evans-Pritchard shows that the basis of totemic phenomena lies in the interrelation of natural species with social groupings according to the logically conceived processes of metaphor and analogy. In his second theory, Radcliffe-Brown realises the necessity of an explanation which illuminates the principle governing the selection and association of specific pairs of species and types used in classification. These two ideas, Lévi-Strauss thinks, help in the reintegration of content with form, and it is from them that he begins.

Totemism, for Lévi-Strauss, is a mode of classification. Totemic classifications are regarded as a 'means of thinking' governed by less rigid conditions than what we find in the case of language, and these conditions are satisfied fairly easily, even when some events may be adverse. The functions that totemism fulfill are cognitive and intellectual: 'totems are not good to eat, they are good to think'. The problem of totemism disappears when we realise that all humans, at all points of time, are concerned with one or the other mode of classification, and all classifications operate using mechanisms of differentiation, opposition, and substitution. Totemic phenomena form one aspect of a 'general classificatory ideology'. If it is so, then the problem of totemism, in terms of something distinct that demands an explanation, disappears. Jenkins (1979: 101) writes: 'Totemism becomes analytically dissolved and forms one expression of a general ideological mode of classification.'

But it does not imply that totemism is static. Although the nature of the conditions under which totemism functions have not been stated clearly, it is clear from the examples that Lévi-Strauss has given that totemism is able to adapt to changes. To illustrate this, a hypothetical example may be taken up. Suppose a society has three clans totemically associated respectively with bear (land), eagle (sky), and turtle (water). Because of demographic changes, the bear clan becomes extinct, but the turtle clan enlarges, and in course of time, splits into two parts. The society faces this change in two ways. First, the same totemic association might be preserved in a damaged form so that the only classificatory/symbolic correlation is now between sky (eagle) and water (turtle). Second, a new correlation may be generated by using the defining characteristics of the species turtle to distinguish between two clans still identified with it. This becomes the basis for the formation of a new symbolic opposition. If, for example, colour is used, yellow and grey turtles may become totemic associations. Yellow and grey may be regarded as expressive of the basic distinction between day and night perhaps. A second system of the same formal type as the first is easily formed through the process of differentiation and opposition (see diagrams of the first and second systems below).



Second System



As is clear, the opposition between sky (eagle) and water (turtle) is split and a new opposition is created by the contrast of day (yellow) and night (grey). In this way, the problems caused by demographic imbalances (i.e., extinction of a clan or the enlargement of the other) are structurally resolved, and the system continues.

3.3.3 Summary of the Study of Totemism

To sum up, totemic phenomena are nothing but modes of classification. They provide tribal communities with consciously or unconsciously held concepts which guide their social actions. Food taboos, economic exchanges and kinship relations can be conceptualised and organised using schemes which are comparable to the totemic homology between natural species and social characteristics. Lévi-Strauss (1962) also extends this analysis to understand the relation between totemism and caste system. Totemism is a relationship between man and nature. Similarities and differences between natural species are used to understand the similarities and differences between human beings. Totemism, which for people is a type of religion, is a way of understanding similarities and differences between man and nature. That is the reason why Poole says that with Lévi-Strauss, the problem of totemism has been laid to rest once and for ever. To quote Poole (p. 9):

If we talk about 'totemism' any more, it will be in ignorance of Lévi-Strauss or in spite of him.

3.3 FINAL COMMENTS

This lesson has introduced you to the basic tenets of structuralism. We have principally focused on the work of Claude Levi-Strauss, illustrating it with the example of totemism, since he is regarded as the main exponent of this method. As was stated earlier, Levi-Strauss worked on kinship, totemism, and myths, and was interested in discovering the underlying structures, which he thought were universal. He was interested in knowing how human mind worked.

That was where his contemporaries and scholars sympathetic to his approach differed with him. They thought that Levi-Strauss was too ambitious in his approach. The structures he was looking for were more his creation than those that emerged from the facts of actual existence. These scholars applied structuralism to the understanding of local, regional systems, and this approach came to be known as 'neo-structuralism'. One of its proponents was Edmund Leach, the British anthropologist.

Leach was certainly critical of the structural-functional ideas, but one thing he learnt from this was researching people's actual ideas, rather than discovering the so-called universal mental structures. In his work, Leach made a distinction between 'jural rules' and 'statistical norms'. Whilst the first referred to the rules as these were in the minds of people, the second were the rules in actual practice.

Structuralism is a-historical, which means that the structures it discovers cut across the time dimension. These are applicable to all societies at all points of time. This is one proposition of structuralism that has invited a number of criticisms. A good method is one which takes care of both the dimensions of time and space.

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Sample Questions

- 1) Define structuralism. What are its main aspects? How does it differ from structural-functional approach?
- 2) Discuss the salient aspects of the works of Claude Levi-Strauss.
- 3) Delineate the features of the structural method.
- 4) What is totemism? Give its structural analysis.
- 5) How does Levi-Strauss's analysis of totemism differ from that of the others? Discuss.

UNIT 4 FEMINISM, POST-MODERNISM AND POST-COLONIALISM

Contents

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Feminism
 - 4.2.1 Feminist Theory in Anthropology
- 4.3 Post-modernism
 - 4.3.1 Modernity, Modernism and Modernisation
 - 4.3.2 Post-modernity and Post-modernism
 - 4.3.3 Influencing Figures of Post-modernism
- 4.4 Post-colonialism
 - 4.4.1 Leading Post-colonial Thinkers
- 4.5 Summary

References

Suggested Reading

Sample Questions

Learning Objectives



After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Understand and define feminism;
- Comprehend how studying gender, forms an important part of our intellectual discourse and its deliverance;
- Understand and define post-modernism;
- Comprehend how the use of subjectivity in post-modernism provides a new perspective and how discourses should vie to be open for different views rather than being closed and definitive;
- Understand and define post-colonialism; and
- Comprehend how post-colonialism as a theory tries to bring out the angst felt by the colonies against the colonisers. Learn how It tries to built upon the experiences of the colonial past and how colonial influences had left an impact on the post-colonial world, be it in describing class, gender, migration etc from examples of post colonial thinkers.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Theoretical perspectives in anthropology have always basically tried to understand society and culture and how they reproduce themselves. In this context, we will deliberate upon three theories of anthropology which can be said to be contributive in deciphering the issues and concerns of the contemporary global scenario. These theories, feminism, post-modernism and post-colonialism have had their origin in the mid-to-later half of the twentieth century. By going into social complexities

they show us a path to understand issues like gender, race, ethnicity, class, caste and any other matter. In this unit we take the three one by one and try to place before the student knowledge about their development, necessity, critique and their usage in comprehending culture and society.

4.2 FEMINISM

In this portion we will look at feminist concerns and how anthropology as a social science includes the feminist perspective to comprehend issues of gender in society. Let us first have a brief knowledge about what Feminism is. Feminism is understood as a social and political movement which argues for equal rights and opportunities for women all over the world. It is from this movement, theorisation of the structure of society in terms of gender arose. Popularly called feminist theory, it concentrates on the understanding of how unequal gender statuses came into being and how gender is constructed in society particularly in the presence of patriarchy. This very movement when studied from a theoretical perspective is called feminist theory. Anthropology among other subjects uses this perspective to study and understand gender inequality and the discrimination that they face in society. It absorbs into its arena issues of difference, representation and critiques of power and knowledge in terms of gender. In this we look into the roles played by women in society and the experiences they go through. In anthropology, feminist theory also concentrates in learning how people accept and get used to oppression and also how in many cases oppressive structures are resisted and attempts are made to change them. Here it involves the study of gender and power and involves integrating theories of structure, agency and practice.

Feminism also takes a critical look at the way in which knowledge has been produced as knowledge not only from a male centric point of view but also from a dominant position in society (caste, medicine, science, etc.) have all been shown to be andocentric, widely found in the works of scholars such as Bernard Cohen, Donna Haraway and Annette Wiener.

4.2.1 Feminist Theory in Anthropology

In this part of the unit we will discuss feminist theory and its use in anthropology according to the stages that feminism has been categorised into. There are clearly three stages in feminism which are divided into first wave, second wave and third wave feminism. Before first wave feminism which is also known as the suffrage movement (because it fought for women's right to vote) anthropological work was conducted by men and the ethnographies collected was mainly based on the information provided by men respondents about their societies. The first wave feminist movement occurred visibly from the mid 19th century to the early 20th century. Feminist theory first came into use in anthropology when during first wave feminist movement anthropologists finally used views and perspectives of women respondents in their ethnographic studies. In this way they brought to the forefront experiences and social behaviour of women which along with the views of men gave anthropological study newer understanding of societies and their intricacies. Moreover such studies were started basically by women anthropologists that opened up a new avenue of accessibility and more complete data.

Among women ethnographers of that time women who helped in bringing this change were Elsie Clews Parsons, Alice Fletcher and Phyllis Kaberry. Elsie Clews Parsons had her training in Sociology. She ventured into anthropology after meeting stalwarts like Sapir, Lowie and Boas. Although she was not an academic, she

conducted many ethnographic studies and in the process so she tried to make the women respondents question and rethink their position in society. Another American anthropologist who did enough ethnographic work on American Indians, Alice Fletcher can also be termed as a feminist who wrote about women in her work but yet the issues of representation and interpretation remained. During this time in Britain, anthropologist Phyllis Kaberry concentrated on the social and political issues women faced in society, their relationship with men clubbed with the study of religion. Her book examining gender equations called *Women of the Grassfields* (1952) is considered a classic, which emphasised on women and development. Some male anthropologists of this time did study women in their research but it was not with an interest to represent them but more in the context of their presence in kinship and marriage studies.

Studies centering on women did start from the 1920s with Margaret Mead being one of pioneers in forwarding such studies. The period from 1920s to 1980s falls under second wave feminism where sex and gender were seen as clearly separate categories. While sex is used to describe a person biologically, gender is used to define a person culturally. Margaret Mead brought in her work a distinction which was earlier missing in anthropological studies where all women were seen to go through the same experiences all over the world. Mead pointed out that, women in different cultures had different experiences. She was the first to opine that behaviour in women is not natural but was culturally driven. Her works *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1928) and *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies* (1935) showed the role of culture in people's development. In her opinion it was cultural factors that were primarily responsible in shaping notions of femininity and masculinity and not the biological and given fact of sex.

In the mid twentieth century works of philosophers, Simone de Beviour and Betty Friedan significantly contributed to the development of feminist theory in Anthropology. de Beviour's book *The Second Sex* (1952) is considered to be a cult piece which provides a radical understanding of the meaning of gender. She postulated that women are not born as women but acquires the definition of woman gradually by the role she plays in society. Friedan's *Feminine Mystique* (1963) is notably the most influential book of the last century that peeped into the world of American housewives and brought out the fact that women even with their worldly material pleasures were not happy to just remain in their households as housewives. It was this book in fact which paved the way for second wave feminism, which among other things looks into inequality in the workplace family, reproductive rights and sexuality.

Anthropologist Eleanor Leacock's work on gender discrimination was noteworthy in influencing second wave feminism. Her studies pointed out that all forms of female subordination is due to the presence of the existing capitalist system. She argued on this with the help of Marx's and Engels' celebrated works *Das Kapital* (1867) and *The Origins of Family, Private Property and the State* (1884).

In the 1970s, anthropologists Michelle Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere questioned the male centric biases in anthropological studies. Rosaldo and Lamphere brought out the book *Woman, Culture and Society* (1974), the first book to completely look into gender and woman's status in society in lieu of the existence of the hierarchical structure allowing them to behave in manners which limit them.

Feminist Anthropology properly established itself as an important aspect of anthropological study in the 1970s. This was finally a reaction to be continuing

male bias in the subject. Noteworthy scholars are Rayna Reiter, Gayle Rubin and Sherry Ortner. Reiter came out with her book *Toward an Anthropology of Women* (1975) where she pointed out that men and women have separate social behaviour and this provides ample reason for women being studied as part of anthropological investigation. Another anthropologist of her time, Gayle Rubin also supported the study of gender and introduced the sex/gender system in 1975. This system suggested that biological behaviour was separate from social behaviour, as differences in gender behaviour was constructed politically and socially rather than being designed by nature. Another pioneer of that time, Sherry Ortner in her *Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?* (1974), equated men with culture and women with nature and put forward the hypothesis that since men dominate nature, they dominate women too. This equation was derived from the nineteenth century Baconian posulate that denied women any intellectual capacity and relegated them to the status of reproductive machines. Engels' submission that women worked hard in the domestic sphere but are nothing but unpaid labourers, gave rise to Marxists feminist theory that examined women's subordination, economically or otherwise that is contained in the division of labour. Some famous Marxists feminist philosophers of the 70s were Shirley Ardner, Pat Caplan and Janet Bujura. They all researched on the role of women in production and reproduction.

Box: A comparative example

It is imperative to the study of Anthropology and its feminist concerns that we discuss the contribution of Annette Weiner, in terms of her restudy of Bronislaw Malinowski's *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922) and his other works based on the lives of the Trobriand Islanders. The knowledge of this study is constructive in the study of feminist theory in anthropology as Malinowski, popular for his contribution to many new ideas, methods and innovations in anthropological study overlooked the importance of women and their roles in his study. This comparative study by Weiner hence can be cited to reestablish the fact that anthropologists were in the past not concerned with the roles played by women in societies and the identities they held. In her famous work *Women of Value: Men of Renown* (1976) she refuted Malinowski's explanation of women in the Trobriand Islands, that they were dominated by their men. She put forward a non-androcentric appraisal, where she suggested that not only were women at par with their male counterparts, in many areas, but it was the women who were the dominant ones in the society. While Malinowski was interested in learning about magic, religion, kinship and economy, Weiner along with these was also interested in the sexes and sexuality. Their main difference laid in the way they interpreted the Trobriand Islanders. While Malinowski did not clarify women's position in his descriptions, 50 years later Weiner did so through her elucidations. While Malinowski describe roles and statuses of women through conversations he had with the men folk, not considering the fact that women too might have a stance in the world they lived in. Weiner's perspective, that of understanding women by conversing to them directly brought out an alternate explanation of their lives, that women controlled the wealth and thus had authority on the Trobriand society. Her re-interpretation suggested that rather than just being equal, they were in fact dominant as the power of wealth and economy was in their hands. This example helps us to learn that study of gender in all their aspects is important, and what anthropology lacked in the past is now comfortably filled in by feminist perspective in anthropology in the study of society in which both gender accommodate various spaces.

With the 1980s came third wave feminism which is all about accepting differences and conflicts in gender. This theory embraces issues of gender and sexuality as cores, which includes questions of variation in gender, like queer theory, transgender, sex-positivity (people have social expectations out of the physical body), post-modernism, post-structuralism, post-colonialism, more so by Edward Said's Orientalism(1979), anti-racism, women from third world countries including women

of colour etc. However main concerns in these remained oppression and empowerment.

Herietta Moore's book *Feminism and Anthropology* (1988), explored two main points: one that gender difference is connected to other social differences like power, class, ethnicity, race etc and second that anthropological research fundamentally is ruled by "sexist ideology" the main being the subject being called the study of man. Here even women anthropologists while conducting research, in most of the 20th century fell under the dictates of masculine models. It is only by countering these ideas and questioning oneself, can a woman scholar researching women and society could clearly decipher and stand for the experiences women of different colours, class, ethnicity all over the world face.

There are certain theories that influence feminist studies in Anthropology. They are practice theory, theory of positionality, performance theory and queer theory.

Practice theory emerges from Marx's notion that every social activity is praxis, that is, a practice. This theory emphasises about behaviours related to restrictions and equality. It views from a feminist perspective how people live their lives in reality and what is practiced. This view came as a reaction to Durkheim's idea of sacred and profane where he suggested that women did not have any symbolic role to play. It tries to understand how systems maintain their continuity even with their existing inequalities and differences. It moreover argues about ideas which exhibit all activities of society to be of contrasting natures.

A view of the essentialist scholars of second wave feminism faces much flak in the late 1980s. It had suggested that women should value their female essence and should make positive use of their feminine characteristics. This was called cultural feminism where women instead of taking part in "manly" activities should accentuate their own abilities. The propounders of this idea were Adrienne Rich and Mary Daly. This notion was denounced during the third wave by an intervention called the theory of positionality. The major denouncers were French post-structuralists. They pointed out that while celebrating female capacities of women the idea ignored the patriarchal oppressive bodies who are responsible for creating such feminine talents. The theory of positionality says that instead of uplifting women cultural feminism actually takes away concepts created to fight female oppression and it ends up doing nothing but create "negative feminism."

A recent theory in feminist anthropological studies is performance theory. It talks about how individuals perform their duties in everyday life. It shows that gender is created through discourse, while sex creates gender. Judith Butler, eminent feminist and author of *Gender Trouble* states that performance of individuals is the creation of discourses. Works of Bourdieu, Sahlins etc have influenced performance advocates.

The last recent theory used in feminist anthropology is Queer theory. This theory voices that what is socially considered normal, advocating heterosexuality may not really be correct. It challenges this "accepted sexual preference". It also emphasises how enculturation has a huge role to play in the identification of conventional sexuality. Main contributions in queer theory has been influence by Foucault and has been advocated by current day feminist philosophers like Judith Butler, Monique Wittig, Diane Mayne, Nancy Scheper Hughes, Lila Abu-Lughod etc.

4.3 POST-MODERNISM

We now come to the description of another contemporary theory, i.e. post-modernism. This is a theory which is highly debated amongst scholars. It is very difficult to define postmodernism as there is no single unifying definition of it. Post-modernism was a dramatic break from modernism (described in the first paragraph of sub-section 4.3.1) and it is of course a continuation of it. Post-modernism is associated with modernism. The term Post means later. Hence what came after modernism may be seen as post-modernism. It arose as a movement which contradicted the modernist idea. It started with the arts and architecture where outlooks which were based on modernism were rejected. It tried to break conventions and look for ideas beyond ordinary explanation, where self and the other, the subject and the object gets combined or dissolved. From arts and architecture, post-modernism as a theoretical deliberation entered into other spheres of study where it questioned constructed social realities. As in the arts, postmodernism in anthropology too interrogates into definite ordering of life, for example, the employers and the employed, men and women, patriarchy and matriarchy and many more other such examples which we usually find to be placed normatively. Post-modernism suggests that instead of studying these either in isolation or specific realities, it is necessary to view them as combined, plural and comparable.

In anthropology, post-modernism has been provided with many explanations by many philosophers. Here we note Melford Spiro's reflections on postmodernism which is rather detailed than the unclear description of the theory. He says "The postmodernist critique of science consists of two interrelated arguments, epistemological and ideological. Both are based on subjectivity. First, because of the subjectivity of the human object, anthropology, according to the epistemological argument cannot be a science; and in any event the subjectivity of the human subject precludes the possibility of science discovering objective truth. Second, since objectivity is an illusion, science according to the ideological argument, subverts oppressed groups, females, ethnics, third-world peoples" (1996).

Before we go describe and talk about the different concerns related to postmodernism in Anthropology, we need to learn a little about the different movements which led to its origin and development.

4.3.1 Modernity, Modernism and Modernisation

These terms are interlinked. They came into being during the renaissance. Madan Sarup in *An Introductory Guide to Post-structuralism and Postmodernism*, defines Modernity as "the progressive economic and administrative rationalisation and differentiation of the social world" (1993). Modernism was defined as "an aesthetic development which brought about a radical shift in consciousness and a violent transformation of social conditions in the late 19th and 20th centuries." ('Postmodernism' by Chris Snipp-Walmsley in Patricia Waugh's ed. *Literary Theory and Criticism*, 2006). It was illustrated by two concerns: Self-consciousness and reflexiveness. The period when modernity and modernism were studied was started with new changes in society. The transition was seen in political and economic spheres where the change was from feudalism to industrialism. Religion got a back seat with the rise of the enlightenment movement. Urbanisation also took place. All these realities and more led scholars to theorise. This is the period which is termed as modernisation that also marks the advent of positivism

and scientific thinking. The designation of anthropology as a science was because of modernist thinking that prioritised rationality.

4.3.2 Post-modernity and Post-modernism

While modernism as a theory in modernity associated itself with ideas like identity, authority, unanimity, inevitability etc, post-modernism looks into difference, multiplicity, cynicism, documentation etc. Post-modernism deliberates that an objective and impartial view of a culture, which is not one's own is unattainable.

Post-modernist anthropological investigation started in the 1960s, which noted that earlier anthropological documentation was based on social and political frameworks which were validated by objective explanation. This, post-modernism depicts as irrational as culture and the world, usually is perceived on the basis of one's own personal experiences and one's own cultural life. As much as one may want to be objective in one's interpretation of other cultures, one is unable to let go of the ingrained biases. Post-modern anthropologists try to correct this situation by trying to be sensitive and subjective as much as possible. In other words the postmodern anthropologists attempt to scrutinise, interpret and appraise existing guidelines of anthropology and at the same time try to survey its codes, regularity and procedures of study.

Simply putting Anthropologists, if they provide their own interpretations it might be boggled by issues of power and wealth which postmodernism tries to defy. This means that they have consider the views of the culture studied and put them forth. Post modernism does not recognise any objective truth or facts; reducing everything to a subjectivity that cannot be evaluated by any rational principle. This for others who do not follow the post modern theoretical path, is threatening and therefore they tend to criticise the postmodern perspective by pointing that postmodernism follows a moral model route. Moral model they insist, decry empirical and scientific data. In fact they feel that a postmodern anthropological approach does not allow a common ground of understanding. Thus the debate today is one of whether representation of knowledge should be based on scientific or subjective and reflexive hence more humanist approach. The post modern author involves the subjects of her study into her analysis.

4.3.3 Influencing Figures of Postmodernism

In social sciences, Friedrich Nietzsche and Martin Heidegger, German philosophers, were the first who inspired postmodern philosophy. However it was the French philosophers like Jacques Derrida, Jean Baudrillard, Michel Foucault etc. who actually developed the theory. Anthropologists who were encouraged to forward this thought are Clifford Geertz, James Clifford, Goerge Marcus, Nancy Hughes etc.

We now provide a brief introduction of these scholars to get a better grasp of the ideas that they postulated.

Jean Baudrillard (1929-2007): Baudrillard was a sociologist by training who used the post modern perspective to explain the world as a set of models. He does so by dividing modernity and postmodernity into two parts. For him every incident in life has already taken place and the world has nothing new to offer. This got him the name of a skeptical postmodernist, based on Rosenau's (1992) division of postmodernists into skeptical postmodernists or affirmative postmodernists. For Baudrillard the postmodern era started with the introduction of mass media, more

specifically cinema and photography. He defined the world to be nothing but images and images are replications. For him truth and science do not hold their real meaning. Truth according to Baudrillard in society is what is agreed upon and science is any mode of explanation.

Jacques Derrida (1930-2004): Derrida too is a skeptical postmodernist. He was known as a poststructuralist. He popularised the concept of deconstruction in post-structuralism and postmodernism. Deconstruction suggests that whatever is documented is to be critiqued or analytically reviewed, to reveal the relationship of meaning between texts. He also questions the western viewpoint on reason. He asserts that it is dominated by “metaphysics of presence”. He argued that anything that was viewed with reason should not be seen as a stable and immortal paradigm. His basic interest was to challenge concepts of truth, knowledge and truth. He proposes that there should be reasoning on reasoning itself. In other words rationality can be contextual and there can be more than one way of reasoning or gaining knowledge.

Michel Foucault (1926-1984): Foucault was a French philosopher of repute and his tenets on postmodernism still hold much weight. For him the truths which are considered by society as permanent, in reality changes with time. Foucault study was basically about the politics of power and how it changes. This was in fact one of the basis of postmodernism. He questioned the facts which were placed in chronological order to describe historical events. He believed that there are hidden parts, parts which are not accounted for, in history which contain concealed knowledge. These however do play a role in giving societies identities. It is due to developing such ideas about truth and knowledge, Foucault is considered to be one of the prime postmodernists. His theory of discourse tells us that there is no absolute truth but truth is constructed out of people talking about it and in this talk there is the entire theory of power that plays itself out. Thus powerful voices are heard more than subordinated ones or many are not heard at all. Thus a discourse is how people negotiate their points of view and how marginal voices make attempts to make themselves heard.

The main adherents of postmodernism in anthropology are discussed below.

Clifford Geertz (1926-2006): Clifford Geertz though prominently known for his work on postmodernism in Anthropology had himself conflicting views about the theory. However his thoughts on post-modernism in anthropology can be divided into two parts. The first half of post-modernism was controlled by literature mostly with concentration on text, genre, style of writing, narration, fiction, dialogue, allegory, representation, symbols etc while the second half of post-modernism dealt with the political aspect of societies. He delved into issues of authority, power and power structure. Issues studied in post-colonialism related to power equations was also deliberated by Geertz, for example, colonialism and power, racism, exoticism. He also questioned the use of narratives about colonies by the Western colonisers and their own understanding of them which differs with the post-modern arena. This connects his views with post-colonialism.

Do note: Clifford Geertz is also known for his work on religion and interpretive theory which is not discussed here.

James Clifford: Like all core post-modernists, James Clifford also advocated the idea that an objective viewpoint in studying and writing ethnography is not possible. For him ethnography makes the author describe it with persuasion where her/his preferences unconsciously come forward. Hence for Clifford, to deconstruct or

critique the way ethnographies are written is the main essence of post-modernism. To do away with the rhetoric by which ethnographers assert power, ethnographies should be more descriptive than being completely interpretive. His views therefore are in total contrast with Clifford Geertz who has been interpretive to a large extent in his ethnographic explanations. James Clifford, states that the balance between the ethnographers' understanding of a group and the group themselves can be maintained through a holistic perspective.

Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1944- –) Nancy Scheper-Hughes is a professor in Medical Anthropology at the University of California, Berkeley. She believes that cultures and societies cannot be studied or valued without morally or ethically understanding them. Only by taking ethics into consideration while studying a society can anthropologists reflect analytically. These views of hers are noticed in her works *Primacy of the Ethical* (2006) and *Death without Weeping* (1993). This postmodern perspective of hers thus suggests that Anthropologists should be made responsible for depicting or failing to depict the discipline as a crucial instrument while describing significant historical periods.

4.4 POST-COLONIALISM

To describe post-colonial theory broadly, it is concerned with the production of knowledge and the representations made of the colonies by the scholars who were part of the colonisers. It thus has to do with happenings of exclusions, disparagement and struggle under colonial rule. So we may say that the word Post-colonialism addresses the historical, political, cultural and textual consequences of the colonial experience between the West (colonisers) and the non-West (colonised). The period examined in this theory dates back from the 16th century to the present day. To specify, Postcolonial cultures, texts and politics are interested in reactions to colonial subjugation which can be said to be adverse and disputable. In fact it is not the critical analysis of what was visibly oppositional but what was actually subtle, sly, oblique and seemingly crafty in their demonstration of dissent. Thus Post-colonialism is an analytical “theoretical approach in cultural and literary studies. However it also designates a politics of transformational resistance to unjust and unequal forms of political and cultural authority which extends back across the twentieth century and beyond.” (*Postcolonialism* by E.Boehmer in Patricia Waugh's ed. *Literary Theory and Criticism*, 2006).

Like feminism and post-modern movements, post-colonialism came to be used in anthropological studies as a theory used to exhibit a sort of disciplinary amendment to conjunctural exigencies. The main issues handled in postcolonial theory are alterity, diaspora, eurocentrism, hybridity and imperialism. Alterity in post-colonialism is a lack of identification with some part of one's personality or one's group. It specifically refers to the attempts by the colonisers to understand themselves, that is Europeans, by positing an alter, the non-European societies. The evolutionary theory for example tried to put forward the so called non-Europeans as 'primitives' or representing the past of Europe. Diaspora indicates people who are either forced or tempted to leave their own homelands and settle in some other part of the world and in the process also adapt another culture. Eurocentrism is the way by which consciously or otherwise European or western ideas, culture, norms etc. are stressed at the expense of other cultures. It is effectively seen in the terms modernisation and development, both of which means in reality to be Westernised. Hybridity is a pertinent notion in post-colonialism. It talks about the mingling or mixing of cultural symbols and customs between the colonising and the colonised

cultures. This mingling can be enriching or it may turn out to be oppressive, depending on how it has been added to the culture. Finally Imperialism refers to having control or authoritative power either through direct state domination or indirectly through economic or political control. The main challenge for postcolonial writers is to reinvent and bring to life their own cultures and also fight prejudices about them.

The Post-colonial movement originated as an anti-colonial political resistance enunciated as part of the dialogue on national liberation. It made its shift to accommodate itself in the cosmopolitan world of academics with much vivacity with the introduction of the text *Orientalism* by Edward Said. This piece of work itself became a postcolonial theory which was conveniently used by settler intellectuals of the Third world countries to discuss the social and political identities and their constructions which is specific to that setting. Interestingly it was the Bandung conference held in 1955 which incepted postcolonial thought as a ‘political grammar’ and introduced the ‘eruption of the native’. The native here are the people who came to be seen as a symbolic representation of the other by the imperial domain as understood by the metropolitan academic. Finally Post-colonialism gave birth to counter-narratives, as cited by Edward Said, “to challenge and resist settled metropolitan histories, forms and modes of thought”. (in *Representing the Colonised: Anthropology’s Interlocutors*, *Critical Enquiry*, 15: 205-225, 1989).

In Anthropology Post-colonialism had to make its foray as the beginnings of the subject was attached to the colonies and the description of their inhabitants provided by the administrators, missionaries, western travelers etc, who kept their superiority intact while recounting narratives about the other.

We now talk about some of the main advocates of this theory who have contributed tremendously to its development.

4.4.1 Leading Post-colonial Thinkers

The main figures of post-colonialism are Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, Arjun Appadurai, Akbar Ahmed, Homi Bhaba and of course many others. However in this unit we provide a brief description of the work of these three thinkers and their post colonial interventions.

Edward Said: The political text “Orientalism” written by Edward Said, brought ideas of Post-colonialism in the forefront where the main tenant was about how the way western people measured up people of the East. Said analysed the European dominating power and their ways of understanding and controlling other peoples and that they were shown as weak, inferior, secondary, effeminate and unable to rule themselves. In his own words it was “a western style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient.” (1979, *Orientalism*). Therefore the Orientalist discussion made a clear demarcation between the rulers and the ruled. Anyone who did not conform to the value based image of the dominant European identity was an Oriental. However later on, Said’s idea of Orientalism did receive some fierce contestation, especially in the 1980s. The notion he had generalised that all empires rule their colonies in the same way was the main point of dispute. He was also criticised for his apparent assertion for alternative humanism. His assumption that the colonised were completely being subdued and made into the object of Western systems of knowledge also came under attack. Edward Said however cleared the protestations in his later work, *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) where along with the western dialectics, also discusses the anti or postcolonial response.

Gayatri Spivak: Gayatri Spivak is an Indian theorist based in the United States. She is most famous for her essay on *Can the Subaltern Speak?*, which is considered to be one of the main defining texts of post-colonialism. Her main argument in post-colonialism has been about the heterogeneity of colonial oppression. She has been prominent since the beginning of postcolonial studies, i.e. the 1980s where she pointed out the differences both understated and noticeable which separate and demarcate the people called natives or the colonised. These natives or others in her comprehension also include migrants and asylum seekers. For her colonial oppression is not monolithic and oppressions in one area or among one people can be of different kinds and so is the kinds of *othering*. She tries to investigate the contradictions within colonial oppression and consciousness and for this she adapts her mentor's (Jacques Derrida, who has been described above) technique of deconstruction. Specifically she questions the particular gendered forms which certainly offers opportunities for differentiation and hence brings forth the heterogeneous colonial experiences. The term subaltern which Spivak uses in her pivotal book has been derived from the work of the Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci. For him Subaltern denotes the non-elite social classes and the proletariat. When Spivak used the term subaltern while studying such states under colonialism, she tried to use it for groups even lower than as used by Gramsci. For example she tries to include tribals, unscheduled castes, untouchables and of course the women within such groups. For Spivak it is also concerning for her that mostly postcolonial studies on women are done by women of the first world nations who while talking about the women who are or have lived colonial lives, displace their thoughts or replace them with their own voices.

Arjun Appadurai: Arjun Appadurai is an anthropologist who is interested in post-colonialism, modernity and globalisation. Appadurai's involvement in post-colonial studies is noticed in his work called *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalisation (1996)*. Appadurai falls under the immigrant intellectual who writes about the south Asians and the effect of modernity on them, from a post-colonial perspective, of course guided by the main premises of Edward Said. For him, the postcolonial construction of relations in a transnational world is not based on how global capital plays in creating multiple types of communities (as has been theorised by other postcolonialists). But he asserts that it is not possible singly for a centre/periphery engagement to create a post-colonial moment. For him it is the movement of people, migration, diaspora who create new types of relations in today's world. For him the emergent global communities are creations of mass migration movements which have changed the way the world exists. It is no more a world based on European value-laden ways and this for him is the post-colonial moment. For him there may be five kinds of imagined landscapes: ethnoscapas, technoscapas, finanscapas, mediascapas and ideoscapas. He makes a postcolonial intervention to describe his imagined scapes to describe the economic and political domination that is faced by today's postcolonial states. He postulates that such imagined spaces are there in contemporary world spaces and that they are hidden by the networks of diaspora, technologies, electronic media etc. His postcolonial thoughts are of importance as he tries to look into the uneven flows of global capital, peoples and communities and their diverse experiences and cultural processes in or from former colonised spaces. His argument of the imagined spaces for people in movement and to see the cultural rather than culture, he establishes a new route in postcolonial studies which tries to understand the links between nationalism, diaspora, cultural processes and globalisation in a postcolonial world.

4.5 SUMMARY

Thus we end our discussion on Feminist theory, Post-modernism and Post-colonialism in Anthropology by noting that these theories explore many perspectives. The contribution of the first theory, i.e., feminism in anthropology has been to provide a gendered methodology where it has been shown that the truth is subjective and that the male point of view is usually biased. Also since women are marginal to all societies, their point of view encompasses other marginal categories also. The intersectionality of gender with other forms of oppression like caste, class, race and ethnicity has also been a major contribution of the gendered approach. It not only includes the representation of women, voicing their concerns and rights in diverse societies but also includes the voice of the researchers, women or men, engaging themselves in such feminist studies. It is the job of the feminist anthropologist to provide ways and means by which women in different parts of the world, having different cultures can empower themselves to lead a freer existence.

In the second theory, i.e. Post-modernism, we can note that it was the postmodern perspective in Anthropology that provided an opportunity for anthropologists to reassess the way they critically appraise culture. This perspective makes the anthropologists to be sensitive and include a holistic approach, by adding different interpretations of any culture rather than just delivering their own viewpoint. However followers of postmodern anthropology do find criticism at the hands of anthropologists who consider empirical findings to be the truth and thus denounce this moral code used by the postmodernists. Postmodernism with its many dimensions remains a movement of existing debate and it is up to the anthropologists to follow the path which enriches the subject in the study of culture.

Lastly in Post-colonialism, we can see that in today's globalised world, Anthropology has a significant link with this theory as within the study of society and culture, it is interested in learning about the self and the other, how the other identifies oneself, about the ravages of the western world upon their colonies etc. Today's post colonial arenas offer much interventions as the creation of mass movements, immigrations, migrations, diaspora allow ample opportunities for anthropology to barge in and critically view the reasons behind such upheavals. Moreover Post-colonialism also allows deliberation on gender, race, ethnic identities etc from an anthropological perspective. These points clearly suggest that in today's contemporary anthropological scenario, post colonialism remains a pertinent outlook to the world that we live in.

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Anthropological Theories-II **Suggested Reading**

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Sample Questions

- 1) Define Feminism, Post-modernism and Post-colonialism.
- 2) Why is the study of gender important?
- 3) How does a post-modernist perspective help in anthropological study?
- 4) Can a post-colonial study be done in India? Elaborate.
- 5) Explain the relevance of these theories in present day Anthropology.
- 6) Write about at least two exponents from each of these three theories and also explain how their work can be used in studying society and culture.