UNIT 4 EMERGING FRONTIERS

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Learning Objectives

This unit would enable you to know:

- the applied aspect of anthropology;
- importance of applied anthropology;
- emerging fields in anthropology;
- use of anthropology in management and corporate world; and
- anthropology in policy making and governance, its history and present context.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This unit will focus on the applied perspective of anthropology. Like many other disciplines, anthropology also has an applied part in it. Anthropology has been used in various contexts. Starting from colonial administration to present day market economy, anthropology has various uses. This unit discusses these issues.

Section 4.2 of this unit would describe anthropology as an applied discipline. It explores the various applied dimensions of anthropology viewing its historical development in the field of anthropological study and also covers the present scenario.

Section 4.3 discusses the emerging fields of anthropology in the present context. It explores mainly two broad areas: anthropology in management and corporate world, and use of anthropology in the field of administration and policy making and governance. This section would also explore the historical dimensions along with the present picture.

4.2 ANTHROPOLOGY AS AN APPLIED DISCIPLINE

Daniel G. Brinton first put forward the concept of applied anthropology. The concept
was developed in America. It’s a very recent development. After the Second World War, American anthropologists developed this concept that finally contributed in administration and development policy in the third world. Applied anthropology, in general, tried to improve the life of people who were in a disadvantageous position in the modern world of colonialism and imperialism. American anthropologists advocated the need of change in those societies and so undertook the challenging task of development under the colonial administration. They also started monitoring other factors in changing people’s lives. The most famous case of ‘applied anthropology’ is Cornell University’s Vicos project in Peru, where an anthropological team under the guidance of A. Holmberg took up the role of ‘patron’ in a large estate. The team carried out basically a paternalistic reform plan but aimed at developing power to the producer.

In India, S. C. Roy, among the Oraons of Chhotanagpur region provided a happy solution to the people regarding a dispute over flags. Applied anthropology does not acquire the same place in all the countries. It does not hold a very respective position in all the countries. But Anthropology has many applied dimensions to it.

4.2.1 History and its Development

It was the British who first gave value to the pragmatic use of anthropology and officially recognised it by employing applied anthropologists (Foster 1969). E. B. Tylor, called anthropology a “policy science” and believed that its use would make human conditions better (Sills 1968). It was Northcote Thomas who used anthropology in 1908 in Nigeria as part of the British administration (Foster 1969). However in the United States in was not until 1934 that applied anthropology was used in administrative work, more specifically in the Indian Reorganisation Act of the New Deal. Anthropologists acted as connection between the Native Americans and the government and recommended the formation of tribal charters and constitutions (ibid). John Collier who was a commissioner of Bureau of Indian Affairs, was vital in the introduction of anthropologists in government work as he believed that their specialised competence can be of immense use in public sector programmes (van Willigen, 1986). In Archaeology too applied anthropology was introduced in the 1920s as policy makers collaborated with archaeologists in projects which were public related. (Fiske and Chambers, 1997).

The issues and conditions faced by Japanese communities which were forcibly removed from the West Coast of Japan to prison camps in the eastern parts of Sierra during the 2nd World War, were studied by applied anthropologists hired by the War Relocation Authority (Foster 1969). In America, Margaret Mead, Fred Richardson and Eliot Chapple, were responsible for starting the Society for Applied Anthropology (SfAA) in 1941 (Fiske and Chambers, 1997). It was in the same year that a journal on applied anthropology with the same name was started by this society. In 1949, the name of the journal was changed to Human Organisation. The members of the society put forward a stand on ethics in anthropology and invited anthropologists to endorse it. It mentioned that anthropologists are to “take responsibility for the effects of his recommendations, never maintaining that he is merely a technician unconcerned with the ends toward which his applied scientific skills are directed” (Mead, Chapple, and Brown 1949; van Willigen 1993).

After the war ended, there was a great demand for doctorates in anthropology who were offered to fill in positions in various anthropology departments in the United States (Fiske and Chambers 1997). The U.S. government also introduced a Point Four Program to advance and evaluate formal technical international aid and foreign
policies. For this the government sought help from anthropologists (Foster 1969). However in the 1960s and 70s the PhD holders were not keen to take up jobs in the public sector due to the U.S. policy in Vietnam (Fiske and Chambers, 1997). But it was a good time for anthropologists specialising in archaeology as jobs were available in resource management of culture which was an outcome of the 1969 National Environment Policy Act (ibid). But concerns were put forward regarding the quality of the archaeologists at work. In view of this the Society of Professional Archeologists (SOPA) was launched and new criteria were created for trained archaeological professionals working in both public and private segments (ibid).

Anthropology students in the 1970s insisted on the need to view “pressing human needs” by the discipline. They also pleaded that they be made well prepared for any job market they might need to join after the completion of their education (ibid). This led to the growth of students taking in jobs with the policy research while voids were created in academic jobs. USAID came out with jobs which required the researcher to find out the social and cultural implications of policy on health care delivery and adoption of technology in it. A journal entitled Practicing Anthropology was brought out in 1978 by SFIAA. It was to bring forth the experiences of practicing anthropologists to the public. This they hoped would help to bring academics and practice closer and to influence further involvement of anthropologists in policy research and execution and also as a medium for discussion on the present and future of anthropology (Everett, 1998; 20[1]).

4.2.2 Present Scenario

Today it is not necessary that one has to be in a university to promote anthropological knowledge. Many anthropologists act as practitioners and exercise their intellect on various cultures and use anthropological methods to conduct research and implement them around the world. Hence we may find them in corporate houses, government departments, health centres, educational organisations etc., providing service through their empirical knowledge. Sometimes these researchers are themselves the administrators, business men, programme officers etc. They make a design and carry it out to curb problems.

It is the challenges that applied and practicing anthropologists face, which make them special. The views and solutions that they offer should express notions of humanity combined with cross-cultural intellect and a spirit which should be action based. They may work on their own or work as a team, with scholars and professionals from other occupations and disciplines.

It is the applied anthropologists who offer much to humanity today. They help in building bridges between cultures. Unlike other professionals, anthropologists in the applied field show reverence towards varied cultures and try to promote common humanity. For the policies that are created by administration and corporations, anthropologists make videos or write simple explanations about policies so that these are also understood by a larger group of audience. Along with this their knowledge of research methods highly help in the formulation of policies, programmes, plans which are of significant benefit for human beings all over.

Different issues related to the development of human beings have been dealt with by the applied anthropologists. Various burning issues like rehabilitation and resettlement of various tribal groups in different parts of the world, disaster management, etc. have also been taken care of by these anthropologists. Other development related issues comes under the coverage of development anthropology. In today’s world of
globalisation anthropology has immense scope in this context. Various new issues are coming up and anthropologists are handling these issues with great interest.

**Activity**

Try to examine how anthropology can be used in practice.

## 4.3 EMERGING FIELDS IN ANTHROPOLOGY

With the new advancement of anthropology many new sub-branches are coming up. Such branches have direct relation to the applied aspect of the discipline. In various new fields like marketing and management, governance and policy making, development and education, in the cyber world and in new media and visual representation, physiological anthropology, eugenics, DNA fingerprinting, etc., anthropology has been emerging as a new dimension. Not only the traditional areas, but also with these new emerging fields anthropology is expanding its horizon to cover up new aspects of human life. Here we will discuss two major emerging areas—management and governance and policy making.

### 4.3.1 Anthropology in Management and Corporate World

As non-academic practitioners began to be employed in the world of marketing and business, to provide a humanistic approach, the term business anthropology came into being in the 1980s. However terms like industrial anthropology, applied anthropology in industry, anthropology of work, etc., were already in use to signify anthropological research in business related areas. Now business anthropology which has become a broad term for working in business related areas is considered to be a sub field of applied anthropology.

Business anthropology may be said to apply anthropological theories and practices to the needs of private sector organisations, especially industrial firms. Its main areas of interests are 1) marketing and consumer behavior, 2) organisational theory and culture, 3) international business, especially international marketing, intercultural management, as well as intercultural communication, and 4) product design and development.

As anthropology studies each and every aspect of any concern, in business anthropology too, its interests are unlimited. It researches all facets of business. Pragmatic anthropological theories and methods are used by business anthropologists to explore everyday business issues.

So to be clearer anthropologists who study business and all its arenas to offer anthropological solutions to business problems can be termed as business anthropologists. The arenas that interest business anthropologists are organisational culture, management, product design and development, consumer behaviour, international business, marketing, human resource management, operations etc. They use anthropological methods, more specifically ethnographic methods, like observation, interviews etc., to study them. Business anthropologists give advice to corporations about how to adopt culturally viable ways to conduct business with customers, suppliers, partners etc. With people of different ethnicities, gender, age group etc., working together today, such anthropologists mete out ways by which equal opportunities and legal provisions for all are created in a working space.

Hence in practice, business anthropologists work on everything from corporate culture, marketing approaches to development of business. They can be so influential,
that if they work systematically, they can enable administrative or institutional reformations for a better and resourceful economy.

Business and industries are created and developed to fulfill human needs in urban market systems and thus they act as basic arrangements of managing economic endeavours. For Marietta Baba (1997) business means the buying and selling of goods and services in the marketplace, also known as commerce or trade, while industry refers to the organised production of goods and services on a large scale, it consists of all the business firms produce and subsequent marketing of the same product. These nomenclatures, when used by business anthropologists in their research, get connected to the main areas of business anthropological practicalities. They may be: 1) anthropology’s involvement in the production of goods and services and the places (industries) where such production takes place, 2) designing of new products and services for customers which are ethnographically related and 3) anthropology and its study of market and the consumer behaviour.

In many universities today, business anthropology is not only taught as an offshoot of applied anthropology but also included in the master’s in business administration programme. This has opened new avenues and more opportunities for the business world and anthropology to work together.

More clearly, such attempts are of much help as they erase many issues which arise in the corporate world. It is noticed through research that most international business collaborations fail regularly due to the incapacity to comprehend and adjust to others’ ways of rationalising and behaving. The world today sees constant changes and people who are in positions to take decisions, have to understand these new advancements and their inferences. To stabilize such situations, the involvement of anthropologists and anthropological methods can certainly come in handy. The understanding of cultural context in both the domestic and the international spheres is equally important. In fact it is in the international arena that the cultural differences would be acute. This of course maximizes the danger of grasping issues incorrectly and taking inappropriate actions or decisions. Anthropologists can help in finding and explaining patterns of behaviour in both domestic and international spheres which has an influence on policies and schemes.

Organisation is one word which both anthropology and management sciences tackle, yet from very different perspectives. What is tangible to management sciences, it is completely symbolic for anthropology. What is defined as a firm to describe organisations for management, for anthropology, it is a much bigger order consisting of institutions. Anthropologists, and especially Mary Douglas, tackles two intricate and connected issues: “how do organisations think”? and “In what conditions could an organisation be an Institution”? In Douglas’ view, organising (which results in organisation) and instituting (which results in institution) are definitely entangled. For anthropology, organisation is a perceived and implicit order of things, a conventional process, some sort of classification linking heterogeneous things, whether tangible or intangible. The result is the institution, which becomes an obvious and natural fact, interwoven with the rest of society. Institution is thus a set of rules that maintain or support coordination.

In fact, for anthropology organisation is something which is imagined, a basic representation but something which is not a visible structure of society. Both anthropology and management studies can contribute to each other’s knowledge and gain from each other.
In today’s world of global economy anthropologists have a lot to do in the management and corporate world. Social organisation being the basis for anthropological study has direct relation to the field of management and corporate world. Until and unless one does not research the local market areas, it is not possible for any business group to capture the market. The market competition has also been influenced by the local market policies. Multinational companies also need to manage the local markets following the local trend. So, it has become very important for them to discover the interests of the local people. For this, anthropological knowledge becomes very necessary. On the other hand, in the corporate world, the analysis of role and status is very important. This is another core area of anthropological research. To manage the corporate employees becomes a very important perspective and for this also anthropological knowledge skills are very much applicable. Thus, we can see that anthropology has a very close relation with the management and corporate world.

Activity
Take any commercial company as a setting, (for example Reebok or Coca Cola) and try to find out if anthropological knowledge can help the company do better.

4.3.2 Anthropology in Policy Making and Governance

It has already been mentioned that anthropology has many other emerging fields, one among them being, anthropology in policy making and governance. This area comes under the vast area of development anthropology.

Social anthropologists became immensely involved in the quickened amalgamation of countries which were colonies earlier in the final quarter of the 20th century into the economic system of the world. This process of assimilation, called anthropology in development, involved the poor countries receiving technology, funding and expertise from countries that were already industrially developed. This was done through multinational, governmental and non-profit organisations and also to a large extent by private companies. This involvement of anthropologists in decolonisation has been going on since after the Second World War, however the emergence of the anthropology of development only became a viable sub field of anthropology in the 1980s. Now a great number of development anthropologists are given jobs by agencies outside academics in order to provide assistance in the development of countries. The World bank, agencies of United Nations, non-governmental organisations like OXFAM, CARE and World Union for the Conservation of Nature are some outfits to name a few, which take in anthropologists. Now it is not the anthropologists who work from the peripheries in availing socially acceptable work but they are the team leaders who act as overseers of such work.

However the exponents of cultural relativism in anthropology have contested the acceptability of specifically development oriented anthropology. They believe that anthropologists should describe social change but they should not create situations to cause change. However the subject believes to take a stand on atrocities observed in local cultures related to child labour, gender hierarchies, poverty, infant mortality, exclusion of poor by democratically participating in administration etc.

Perhaps the greatest achievement of development anthropologists has been the demonstration to economists and technical specialists that the “beneficiaries” of development, the low-income majorities in poor countries, must be active participants at all levels of the process if it is to be successful. This means that their expertise as
resource managers must be acknowledged and fully incorporated in the identification, design, implementation, and evaluation of development projects. Anthropologists have also demonstrated the internal complexity and socioeconomic differentiation (by class, age, gender, ethnicity, education, etc.) of local communities that were assumed by outside "experts" to be homogeneous. Development anthropologists have repeatedly demonstrated that projects assumed to be broadly beneficial have too often created more losers than winners.

Anthropologists nevertheless have had a considerable effect on the development of river basin interventions, particularly in resettlement of population from upstream and downstream regions near large hydropower dams. Involvement has also been seen in pastoral production systems on semi-arid rangelands, environmental management of communities, social forestry, gender aspects of development, ethnomedicine, involvement of indigenous practitioners in health systems, sharing of indigenous knowledge and in matters of biodiversity.

4.3.2.1 Historical Background

Since the days of colonialism, anthropology has served various interests of people. The earliest use was found in the political administration in England. The expertise of anthropologists was utilised in tackling certain administrative problems in British colonies. But as the employer solely decided the objectives, the anthropologists had hardly any scope to understand the situation with empathy. The needs and consequences of the target group community did not get any importance. However, the duty of anthropologists was chiefly concerned with the recording of the behaviours of the native people who prevented the administrators to take crude decisions and hasty political action. Some anthropological training centres were established for future colonial rulers where ethnology and comparative linguistics occupied a prominent place. Anthropological surveys on colonial people were instituted from 1929, under the enthusiasm of Bronislaw Malinowski.

In the United States, anthropology began to be used in office of Indian Affairs by 1933. The most significant use was noticed with agriculture. It helped in understanding the way of life of American farmers. However, the knowledge of anthropology used in the office of Indian Affairs was almost similar to the colonial administrators in England. None of them were conscious about the ethics involved. France, Belgium, Netherlands also started employing anthropologists to facilitate the administration of their colonies.

During the Second World War, United States' government hired many anthropologists to help in solving their military problems. The situation got complicated with the Japanese prisoners who did not behave in the usual way. All the Japanese soldiers who were captured in the battle showed a practice of self killing before they were taken to prison. Studies of anthropologists on Japanese culture and character made the American military leaders aware that the Japanese soldiers preferred an honorable death in their own hands because they consider capture as a matter of great disgrace. Anthropologists also informed that the Japanese regarded their emperor almost like God, whose word was sufficient to cause all Japanese soldiers to lay down their arms. After working with the anthropologists, Americans not only learnt about the Japanese mode of thinking, they also acted as per the advice of anthropologists to win the situation. Since anthropologists have solved many political and military matters, after the Second World War a considerable number of applied anthropologists were called upon to upgrade different other projects associated with health, economy, education, etc. A list furnished by Clyde Kluckhohn showed that the anthropologists
of America worked in the various departments of states, in office of strategic services, in the board of economic welfare, in military, in naval services, in the office of war information, in peace corps, in foreign economic administration, in federal security administration, in medical branch of army-air forces, in chemical welfare division, etc. the expertise of anthropologists was recognized in various situations. Their roles were basically like advisers. Sometimes they advised the government of an emergent nation about building of roads, bridges, dams, etc. and sometimes helped a public health specialist in epidemiology by giving advice regarding the control of Malaria, Leprosy, Tuberculosis, etc. An anthropologist might act as an economist, an educator or an agronomist. Many applied anthropologists conducted rehabilitation programs for the handicapped.

Thus, we can see how anthropologists have participated in many governmental affairs influencing policy making and administration. Not only in the west but also in our own country we find such immense participation of anthropologists in these fields.

4.3.2.2 Indian Context

The British East India Company made the first application of anthropological knowledge in 1807. Francis Buchanan was appointed to conduct ethnographical surveys in order to project a clear picture on the life-style and religion of locals. Anthropological training was provided to some officials who performed administrative jobs as well as prepared some hand books, gazetteers and monographs on tribes and castes of India. The persons involved in such works were- Risley, Dalton, Grigson, Thruston, etc. The officials who worked in health services and the educators who were in missionary schools utilized these information with the help of British rule and administrators. Verrier Elwin and C. V. Furer-Hamindorf came forward with the concept of tribe. They also formed the tribal policies. Indian anthropologists Rai Bahadur Sarat Chandra Roy studied extensively the tribes of Chhotanagpur and Orissa. He fought for the tribal rights and influenced government policies to a great extent.

In the post colonial period we get some other responsible anthropologists who not only contributed to the study of tribe, caste and village but also influenced the policies of governance. The provisions of Indian constitution where the interests of the scheduled castes and tribes are being protected are also based on anthropological findings. In post independent era anthropologists like N. K. Bose, D. N. Majumdar, A. Aiyappan tried to understand the tribal situation in India. Anthropologists evolved the Constitution of India. These anthropologists kept themselves involved in formulating development programs for the weaker sections of the society and showed their interest in the implementation and evaluation of the programs. The knowledge of anthropology helped both the Union Government and States in framing policies of socio-economic amelioration. Anthropology-oriented approach was proved useful for internal reconstruction of the country.

4.3.2.3 Present Context

Today's anthropologists do not limit themselves with tribal life or rural people as like the past. They have extended their knowledge and views for overall development of the nation. They have provided attention on health and nutritional status, family welfare and childcare, care of aged and disabled and so on. The work of anthropologists ranges from tribal rehabilitation to population growth, malnutrition and adult education, vocational training to labour unrest. The varied anthropology fields include administration, Medicine and public health, education, industry, economic
development, community development and also the area of race and ethnic relations with social policy issues. The opinions of anthropologists have even found to be valuable in the needs of athletics, defense service, forensic science and criminology, national integration and international relations.

It is the eminent Indian anthropologists like S. C. Dube, L. P. Vidyarthi, B. K. Roy-Burman, M. N. Srinivas, M. N. Basu and many others, whose values and thoughts, and actions have accelerated the progress of India.

The ideas of anthropologists in formulating plans and policies for the Indian Government do not always get due weightage. There are immense scopes in this field of policy making, where anthropological knowledge can really bring change, specially in a country like India where diverse populations live. The developmental projects are operated often by the people with no or little anthropological knowledge. Hence, due to lack of proper implementation many policies fail to attain the goals. In these cases anthropologists can put forward their knowledge. Some methodological dimensions like Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) are coming up and we can hope for frequent participation of the anthropologist not only in policy making but also in policy implementing in near future. The concept of good governance also supports implementations.

4.4 SUMMARY

In this unit you studied new trends and emerging frontiers in anthropology. You have learnt how anthropology has developed in different points of time and has reached today’s status. We have discussed these different phases of development in anthropology. Like any other discipline, anthropology has been coming up with new areas of interest. The applied perspective is such a new area under anthropological study. Anthropology as an applied science is getting immense importance in different areas like management and governance. People’s participation becomes important in these areas and anthropological research provides such scopes. As a result anthropological research methods are becoming more and more relevant for these areas. After learning these emerging trends you would be able to get an idea about the future perspectives of anthropology.

References


**Suggested Reading**


**Sample Questions**

1) Discuss the emerging fields in anthropology.

2) Discuss how anthropological research is useful in policy making and maintaining good governance.

3) Discuss how anthropology is related to management studies.

4) Critically discuss the role of anthropologists in colonial rule.