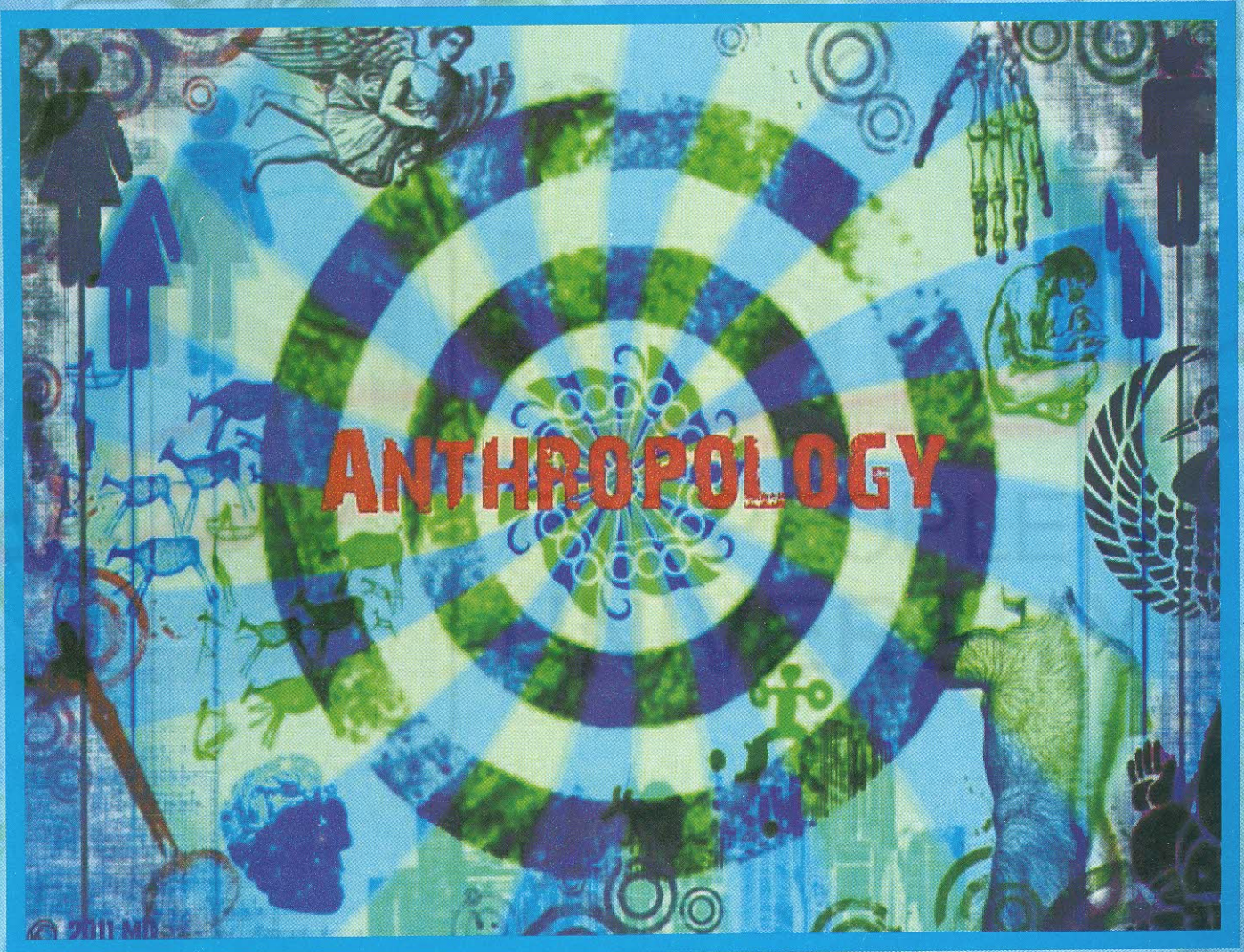




**ignou**  
THE PEOPLE'S  
UNIVERSITY

Indira Gandhi National Open University  
School of Social Sciences

**MANI-001**  
**ANTHROPOLOGY AND**  
**METHODS OF RESEARCH**



**Field Work Tradition in Anthropology** **2**



---

“ शिक्षा मानव को बन्धनों से मुक्त करती है और आज के युग में तो यह लोकतंत्र की भावना का आधार भी है। जन्म तथा अन्य कारणों से उत्पन्न जाति एवं वर्गगत विषमताओं को दूर करते हुए मनुष्य को इन सबसे ऊपर उठाती है।”

- इन्दिरा गांधी

---



---

*Education is a liberating force, and in our age it is also a democratising force, cutting across the barriers of caste and class, smoothing out inequalities imposed by birth and other circumstances"*

- Indira Gandhi

---

Block

# 2

## **FIELDWORK TRADITION IN ANTHROPOLOGY**

---

### **UNIT 1**

|                                    |          |
|------------------------------------|----------|
| <b>Fieldwork and its Relevance</b> | <b>5</b> |
|------------------------------------|----------|

---

### **UNIT 2**

|                    |           |
|--------------------|-----------|
| <b>Ethnography</b> | <b>14</b> |
|--------------------|-----------|

---

### **UNIT 3**

|                                            |           |
|--------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>Techniques, Methods and Methodology</b> | <b>27</b> |
|--------------------------------------------|-----------|

---

### **UNIT 4**

|                               |           |
|-------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>Genealogy and Pedigree</b> | <b>42</b> |
|-------------------------------|-----------|

---

---

## Expert Committee

---

Professor I. J. S. Bansal  
Retired, Department of  
Human Biology  
Punjabi University, Patiala

Professor K. K. Misra  
Director, Indira Gandhi  
Rashtriya Manav  
Sangrahalaya, Bhopal

Professor Ranjana Ray  
Retired, Department of  
Anthropology  
Calcutta University, Kolkata

Professor P. Chengal Reddy  
Retired, Department of  
Anthropology  
S. V. University, Tirupati

Professor R. K. Pathak  
Department of Anthropology  
Panjab University, Chandigarh

Professor A. K. Kapoor  
Department of Anthropology  
University of Delhi, Delhi

Professor V. K. Srivastava  
Principal, Hindu College  
University of Delhi, Delhi

Professor Sudhakar Rao  
Department of Anthropology  
University of Hyderabad  
Hyderabad

Professor. S. Channa  
Department of Anthropology  
University of Delhi, Delhi

Professor P. Vijay Prakash  
Department of Anthropology  
Andhra University  
Visakhapatnam

Dr. Nita Mathur  
Associate Professor  
Faculty of Sociology  
SOSS, IGNOU, New Delhi

Dr. S. M. Patnaik  
Associate Professor  
Department of Anthropology  
University of Delhi, Delhi

Dr. Manoj Kumar Singh  
Assistant Professor  
Department of Anthropology  
University of Delhi, Delhi

**Faculty of Anthropology  
SOSS, IGNOU**

Dr. Rashmi Sinha, Reader

Dr. Mitoo Das  
Assistant Professor

Dr. Rukshana Zaman  
Assistant Professor

Dr. P. Venkatramana  
Assistant Professor

Dr. K. Anil Kumar  
Assistant Professor

---

**Programme Coordinator:** Dr. Rashmi Sinha, SOSS, IGNOU, New Delhi

**Course Coordinators:** Dr. Mitoo Das & Dr. K. Anil Kumar

---

### Content Editor

Prof. P. Venkata Rao  
Department of Anthropology  
University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad

---

### Language Editor

Dr. Anita Sinha  
GDM College  
Magadh University, Patna

---

### Block Preparation Team

#### Unit Writers

Professor B. G. Banerjee (Unit 1)  
Department of Anthropology  
Panjab University, Chandigarh

Dr. Abhik Ghosh, Associate Professor (Unit 3)  
Department of Anthropology  
Panjab University, Chandigarh

Professor B. Krishna Reddy (Unit 2)  
Department of Folklore and Tribal Studies  
Dravidian University, Kuppam

Professor V. Gangadharam (Unit 4)  
Department of Anthropology  
Sri Venkateshwara University, Tirupati

---

*Authors are responsible for the academic content of this course as far as the copyright issues are concerned.*

---

### Print Production

Mr. Manjit Singh  
Section Officer (Pub.), SOSS, IGNOU, New Delhi

---

### Cover Design

Dr. Mitoo Das, Assistant Professor  
Anthropology, SOSS, IGNOU

August, 2011

© Indira Gandhi National Open University, 2011

ISBN-978-81-266-5554-0

*All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced in any form, by mimeograph or any other means, without permission in writing from the Indira Gandhi National Open University.*

*Further information about the School of Social Sciences and the Indira Gandhi National Open University courses may be obtained from the University's office at Maidan Garhi, New Delhi-110068.*

Printed and published on behalf of the Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi, by Director, School of Social Sciences.

Laser typeset by Mcronics Printographics, 27/3 Ward No. 1, Opp. Mother Dairy, Mehrauli, New Delhi-30

Printed by : Akashdeep Printers, 20-Ansari Road, Dary Ganj, New Delhi-110002



---

## BLOCK 2 FIELDWORK TRADITION IN ANTHROPOLOGY

---

### Introduction

Fieldwork formed the foundation for the discipline of anthropology. For Clyde Kluckhohn, a well known anthropologist, anthropology is like a great mirror in which man looks at his own diversity. This pursuit is carried through fieldwork. Anthropology is a field based discipline, and without this core experience of anthropology, no one can become an anthropologist. Though, practitioners of several other disciplines do carry out fieldwork, anthropological field work is unique in several respects. Traditionally, anthropological fieldwork is carried by long term stay among the people under study, learning their language, and understanding their life style from the point of view of the people. After gaining entry in the field, building rapport forms the first priority, as all sorts of personal information is of interest for anthropologists. Anthropologists are known for their participation in the society as a humble learner with empathy towards people; simultaneously maintaining a scientific detachment. The expectations of the anthropologist's immersion in the society and identification with people are such that, both sides experience the sorrow of parting at the end of fieldwork. The term field refers to the delimited territory and population for the purpose of study. For anthropologists, field is considered as similar to the laboratory for the scientist. Like the scientist, who observes the phenomena in different experimental conditions, the anthropologist observes the people under different social and cultural settings. Ethnography, the descriptive account of the people or culture under study, emerges as a product of fieldwork. Ethnographies from different societies form the basis for anthropological theories and concepts. Different techniques are used for collecting the raw material or data required for building ethnography. Techniques are used for collection of specific data. For example, genealogies and pedigrees are important techniques of data collection in anthropological fieldwork. Combinations of such techniques known as methods give a focus or direction to data collection. For example, historical method involves different techniques like interviewing, case studies, and content analysis of various documents. On the other hand, methodology refers to the entire research procedure, starting from conceptualisation of research problem, followed by data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Anthropology began as an attempt to understand and explain '**other cultures**' (in those days non-western societies), emerged as a field based discipline. Isolated from own people, living in the midst of strange and suspicious people, early anthropologists faced various adjustment problems and emotional disturbances leading to psychological stress, commonly labeled as culture shock. The practice of ethnography initially confined to tribal and peasant societies, in due course of time got extended to schools, hospitals and other organisations. All the topics enumerated above are the areas discussed in each unit of this block, namely Fieldwork and *its Relevance* (Unit 1), *Ethnography* (Unit 2), *Techniques, Methods and Methodology* (Unit 3) and *Genealogy and Pedigree* (Unit 4). The learner will be taken through these aspects elaborately so that s/he not only gets a comprehensive idea about the importance of fieldwork and its necessity in anthropological study, but also gets confident enough to use them in an effective way while venturing into the field.





ignou  
THE PEOPLE'S  
UNIVERSITY



---

# UNIT 1 FIELDWORK AND ITS RELEVANCE

---

## Contents

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Approaches to Fieldwork
- 1.3 Fieldwork Tradition
- 1.4 Beginning the Fieldwork
- 1.5 Ethics in Fieldwork
- 1.6 Summary

References

Suggested Reading

Sample Questions

## Learning Objectives



After studying this unit, the student should understand:

- the major fieldwork tradition in anthropology and its most important characteristics;
- the beginning and growth of fieldwork tradition;
- the contributions made notably by Boas, Malinowski, Ruth Benedict and Margaret Mead;
- the various steps involved in a good anthropological fieldwork; and
- the ethical aspects in anthropological fieldwork.

---

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

---

Fieldwork is the study of people and their culture in their natural habitat. "Anthropological fieldwork has been characterised by the prolonged residence of the investigator, her/his participation in and observation of the society, and her/his attempt to understand the inside view of the native people and to achieve the holistic view of a social scientist"(2007). A society can be said to provide a ready-made laboratory for the social scientist. This unit will provide how fieldwork started in anthropology and how it developed into an intrinsic part of the subject.

---

## 1.2 APPROACHES TO FIELDWORK

---

Fieldwork is intrinsic to the lives of socio-cultural anthropologists and equally for physical and archaeological anthropologists though for different concerns. It is something that stays with them for their entire career for the extraordinary experience it provides. It is a period where every time a research is to be conducted empirically, one has to devote at least a year if not less and extend it



to as many years as may be required to gather satisfactory findings. In the past such involvement led to total isolation from the researcher's own life and accepted the unfamiliar and unknown setting as her/his own.

---

### 1.3 FIELDWORK TRADITION

---

In the beginning, anthropologists depended on accounts written by traders, travelers, missionaries and administrators. They used these materials for producing grand theories. In the later stages, anthropologists started sending questionnaires for collecting information on areas of their specific interests. Dissatisfaction with the inadequacies of such material made anthropologists, undertake field visits to collect their own data. Initially they undertook field trips as part of inter-disciplinary teams like Torres straits expedition, but gradually individual fieldwork became a trend. Malinowski's fieldwork among Trobriand islanders can be seen as a landmark in fieldwork tradition in anthropology.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century interest for field studies arose both to understand the evolution of humans as also to know how contemporary 'exotic' humans of unknown places existed. This also arose because of Europe's expansion on lands which they made into colonies. The waning cultures of Native American tribes also intensified the interest to know about others. During this time, this new anthropological methodology was not without its flaws. The data instead of being collected by anthropologists from the field themselves were actually gathered by missionaries, travelers, traders, colonial administrators, etc. during their visits to such locales. This meant that the anthropologists in reality read these accounts and gave their own interpretation. Thus anthropologists of that period came to be known as 'armchair' anthropologists as they did their enquiry from the comfort of the libraries or studies instead of actually venturing into the real field. Such a celebrated anthropologist was James Frazer whose work on religion and myth was completely based on secondary sources of information. It was only towards the end of the nineteenth century, did anthropologists start visiting the field to conduct pragmatic field studies. Major anthropological fieldwork of that time was conducted by the Americans and the British, though the Germans and the French cannot be ignored. Franz Boas in America and Alfred C. Haddon in Britain conducted quite notable expeditions of that time in British Columbia and in Torres Strait respectively. Their main intention was to expand their knowledge to a level where understanding of human beings became more fertile.

We cannot deny the importance of fieldwork in the study of anthropology. It is in fact the most pertinent device in the existence of anthropology as a subject. Along with fieldwork, the method of 'participant observation' which bore out as a consequence of it is equally essential in anthropological enquiry. This method was made prominent by the famous anthropologist, Bronislaw Malinowski who made abundant contributions to the development of the subject, including the theory on functionalism. He may have not been the first to make use of the participant observation method, but the way he used it, with a combination of using local linguistic expertise, the way he described it in his most celebrated work, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922), etc. made it the most used method for many years in anthropology.



America saw proper ethnographic fieldwork in the investigations of Franz Boas and his students. However their studies were not the kind advocated by the British, more particularly by Malinowski. They mostly believed in short fieldworks, with breaks in between. Ruth Benedict who was one of Boas' student and known for her work on culture and personality was one who conducted field work in his style. Another student of Boas, Margaret Mead, known for her work in Samoa, however conducted her fieldwork in the British style. It was only from the 1940s, did the Americans started conducting long intensive field studies.

In France, anthropologists like Levi-Strauss were more interested in oral and textual traditions than in fieldwork experiences of the ethnographer. However fieldwork tradition became popular in other Western European countries and also outside Europe and United States.

Fieldwork involves, besides the use of participant observation, the building up of rapport and friendly links with the people they intend to study. They should observe intently and listen attentively to everything around them, but at the same time they should be cautious enough to not disturb the regular course of life. Once the respondents become comfortable with the researcher's presence, then one can start making use of other methods like conversing, interviewing, photographing, collecting statistical data to gather more information. But this information collected should be understood without any biasness. The way of traditionally recording material collected is by documenting it in a notebook. Even after coming back from the field to one's temporary dwelling in or near the field, one must note down the day's events and experiences. Such a field-note or a field diary is a must for researchers as it helps immensely in creating a good ethnography. In fact the way field work is conducted in anthropology is unique and clearly differentiates it from sociology, which in many other matters exhibit similarities.

The way fieldwork has been conducted from the time it started in anthropology, it had to question and re-question itself about the issues of methodology and ethics. As fieldwork is taken to be a method, it is expected that it will be followed in a particular specialized way. However fieldwork may lead to situations about which a field guide may not have instructions about. Teachers and supervisors might not be able to prepare a student about to go to the field fully. One has to finally depend on one's instinct and intellect to conduct fieldwork fruitfully, and at the same time be sensitive towards the people studied. A course on fieldwork and methodology was not present for many years in universities. A student was expected to go through with it as part of her/his initiation to the subject completely.

---

## 1.4 BEGINNING THE FIELDWORK

---

The anthropologist chooses the geographical and cultural area for his field project, studies the literature, and, if the language has been recorded, learns as much of it as possible before going into the field. Today, he will most likely also be interested in a specific problem and in social or culture theory, and he will endeavour to be au courant with the literature.

For the first couple of months or more, the fieldworker proceeds with care so as not to hurt anybody's sensitivities. To receive complete acceptance from the



people studied, one has to advance most diligently and try to learn about the native dos (customs and decorum) and don'ts (taboos and bans). If there are times when one is in a situation where one is not aware about what is the expected behaviour, then one should maintain as much politeness as possible and learn about it without creating any commotion. These things cannot be taught and one has to device one's own mechanisms to obtain acceptance.

Once rapport is built with the people and also after the researcher has come to terms with his apprehensions and the existing scenario, he can now start building on his proposed work routine. The tasks to be taken up at the beginning of fieldwork should be preferably impersonal. One must at this stage try to learn the native language as communicating in the language of the group studied helps in building a sense of camaraderie, which in turn helps in the collection of data. But it is of course easier said than done, as complexities in language may differ from place to place and also a researcher's learning capabilities may vary from person to person. Hence it is more important to grasp those words or sentences that may further one's research rather than waste time in learning the entire language.

To create a census is the next essential task. Both learning the language and making the census can go hand in hand. The census helps in knowing who inhabits which space and also the composition of each household. It also helps to get acquainted with the people living in the households. This movement of collecting census from one household to the other builds up the roles of participation and observing. The fieldworker observes and jots down everything that catches her/his eye though not realising its significance at that time. The fieldworker slowly starts involving herself/himself in the daily affairs of the community studied or observes lengthy rituals related to marriage, death, initiation etc. S/he watches intently as the people go about their activities pertaining to cultivating crops, fishing, cooking, etc. S/he listens to conversations and local gossip carefully in order to pick up valuable clues related to her/his work. Here taking field notes help as later during the time of classification and analysis, these notes provide the fieldworker with valuable information.

The participation of the fieldworker in different situations would vary from one community to the other and also from one investigator to the other. Evans-Pritchard (1940) while studying the Nuer hardly had any time to himself. His camp was always surrounded by the native visitors whom he describes as "persistent and tireless". We find that some anthropologists like to be a part of ritualistic performances, feasts and other social events. There are others who observe from afar and simply take notes.

In whatever way a fieldworker gets involved, some friendships do form between her/him and some people in the community. These people are vital in creating a position for the fieldworker in the field and they also help in generating the most beneficial information. These may be anyone from the local doctor to the local priest.

Once the fieldworker has progressed in managing the above discussed issues, s/he can now concentrate on basic problems of anthropology, like studying kinship system, marriage, family type, residence, economy, religious and political organisations, witchcraft, magical practices and all other ways of life of the community which the fieldworker finds significant and interesting enough



to study. S/he starts enquiring through means of structured and unstructured interviews and checks the validity of the answers through the actual behaviour observed. It is but obvious that some inconsistency remains between what is ideal and what is practiced. Oscar Lewis (1961) suggests the use of tape recorders to conduct long interviews with various members of the community as it allows the delivering of a better humanistic account of events. It is the nuances and pauses in everyday discussion that can be caught on tape which gives more meaning to the information collected. Powdermaker (1962) had inter-African conversations recorded by an African assistant, which showed unprompted tones of emotions and subtleties of African life.

The fieldworker should always be ready for events which are unexpected or chance occurrences. For example, a quarrel, an elopement, a premature delivery etc expose newer facets of a culture which furthers the investigation. The fieldworker should see to it that whichever avater s/he is playing, either that of an interviewer or an observer, or a listener, the level of communication with the people should always be reciprocal.

The fieldworker should be aware all the time that s/he is in the field to collect data and hence even though s/he needs to be involved with the community studied, s/he should also know where to draw the line and be detached. If one is an expert in playing this dual role with ease than one can easily conduct one's investigation without creating unnecessary emotional complications.

It is sometimes said that a high degree of involvement in the field might make scientific objectivity take a back seat. This is not true. As long as the fieldworker is able to detach herself/himself whenever necessary and is aware of her/his responsibilities, both detachment and involvement can go hand in hand. This ambiguous nature of the fieldworker actually allows her/him to maintain normalcy.

While conducting fieldwork, the fieldworker is always aware of her/his theoretical focus. Aspects of functionalism, structuralism, feminism, post-structuralism, post-modernism, marxism, etc., are used together or alone to construct points of reference. These theories on their own or in groups guide the fieldworker's choice of problems, the techniques s/he uses, the hypothesis and the kind of data s/he accumulates and the way it is finally interpreted. Data collection and use of theories may not be considered as separate processes because while the fieldworker is collecting data, at the same time s/he is also thinking about what hypothesis to apply, how the data is to be compared and what theories can define her/his work.

It is necessary to keep in mind that using a hypothesis and collecting empirical data are done separately while in the field but both are to be connected later as hypothesis will be tested on the basis of the data collected.

However negative or positive data maybe as far as hypothesis is concerned, it is the demand of scientific standards that honesty be retained. It is possible that different interpretations can be given on the same data. A noteworthy honest representation is Cora DuBois's study of the Alorese (1944).

Fieldwork has seen many changes from the time it began. It now do not ideally follows the route showed by Malinowski where in an apparently homogenous setting with territorial and cultural boundaries, the fieldworker had to spend many years doing intensive fieldwork with the help of participant observation.



The end of World War II and the decline of colonies on the one hand and the development of anthropology in university circles on the other, made the access and huge funds for long trips to distant places made it an unreasonable objective to attain for the new generation of students. Rather the students now turned their attention to studying newer inviting ideas and realities near or within their own societies.

The new leanings in anthropological research have shifted from holistic studies to more particular issues. The places of investigation are not necessarily isolated simple societies but complex urban societies. New methods along with the traditional participation observation, interview, case study, genealogy, etc, are used. It has become imperative for the fieldworker to realise that while studying a society, s/he becomes a part of the condition explored. There are of course advantages too if a team studies complex and large societies. Clyde Kluchhohn, anthropologist and physician Dorothea Leighton, who studied the Navajo (1946) is a good example of a team from different disciplines.

There is a great concern today about the use of sampling method. It is not as if anthropologists were not aware of it in the past. In any historical reconstruction of a population, to find a sample is almost next to impossible. However in simple societies this task is not too hard as the population is usually small and the entire population can be included in the investigator's genealogical chart. From the chart, it was comparatively easy to ascertain the incidence of kinds of behaviour without the use of any complicated statistical methods. Nowadays since anthropologists study large complex societies often, thus they employ assistants who are assigned to make a random survey either at the beginning of fieldwork to verify standards or at the end to authenticate or refute attributes of the research work.

**Activity**

Explain the basic requisites a fieldworker needs to know or do while venturing into the field.

---

## **1.5 ETHICS IN FIELDWORK**

---

Fieldwork involves a range of methodologies including participant observation, in-depth interviews, direct observation of individual or group behaviour, or a combination of both qualitative approaches (Denzin and Lincoln 1998). Social scientists conducting fieldwork confront unique ethical dilemmas in the course of conducting their investigations, particularly when researchers are actively engaged with participants in their natural environments. Ethical dilemmas occur when there are conflicts about what is considered to be an appropriate response to a situation involving the investigators, research participants, or the production and use of research materials. A framework for resolving ethical dilemmas in fieldwork is outlined:

- 1) **Informed Consent:** National and international guidelines for ethical conduct in research with human subjects identify specific requirements for consent: the provision of information, comprehension of information, and voluntary participation (Faden and Beauchamp 1986, Weisstub 1998). A number of factors influence informed consent in fieldwork: the specific goals of the research, the socio-cultural context of the research projects,



and communication issues that influence comprehension of information. Language barriers may be reduced through the use of an interpreter. However, translators must negotiate not only language, but also socio-cultural and contextual factors.

- 2) **Beliefs about Personhood Individual Autonomy and Decisional Capacity:** They are embedded within the social and cultural patterns of family ties and community obligations. Socio-cultural differences in beliefs about the nature of personhood and the location of decisional authority for consent have been problematic for an investigator conducting fieldwork. In fieldwork involving direct observation for group activities, arrangements are usually made prior to initiating the study to inform group members that the fieldworker will be present in the course of routine activities. In a closed system such as a hospital unit, a community centre, or other institutional setting, informed consent should be obtained from all those who are at the facility on a regular basis. In some group observations conducted in the course of fieldwork, it may not be possible or necessary to obtain informed consent from every person present.
- 3) **Protection of Confidentiality:** Protection of confidentiality and privacy for research participants is an important aspect of fieldwork (Cassell and Jacobs 1987). Fieldwork investigations often involve the collection of sensitive information concerning an individual's personal life, including information on physical conditions, mental illness, or behaviour regarding illegal activities. Individuals or communities could be harmed if information is inadvertently or purposely disclosed. In some cases, information could be used to ostracize and marginalize research participants, particularly if research participants suffer from a stigmatizing illness such as leprosy, HIV/AIDS, or if they are involved in activities that may be viewed as socially deviant. At each stage of the research? data collection, data analysis, and data reporting? every effort should be made to protect the privacy of the participants studied. In obtaining informed consent, investigators are obliged to advise participants in fieldwork about the methods designed to protect their privacy.
- 4) **Relationships with Research Participants:** In fieldwork the researchers have the opportunity to form close personal relationships with research participants because of the collaborative nature of ethnographic approaches such as participant observation. The development of trust between fieldworkers and the individuals involved in the research enhances the potential for collecting important information relevant to the study. Despite what some might view as the natural inclination to form an emotional attachment with a close companion, the prevailing opinion among social and behavioural scientists is that sex with participants in the field should be avoided. Sexual relationships between research and study participants may diminish the relative objectivity of the investigator. As with sexual involvement with study participants, engaging in illegal activities seriously threatens the integrity of study findings and places the researcher at risk socially, professionally, and in some cases, physically.
- 5) **Fieldworker and Intervention:** Questions concerning the intervention of a field worker in problematic situations that occur in the course of conducting research are challenging. The field worker's decision should be a judgment based on the purpose of the study, the context, and the



specific event that occurs. The fundamental problem is one of advocacy, when to be an advocate for research participants and when to maintain the more circumscribed role of the investigator (Bosk 1985). In general, non intervention is the accepted mode for fieldwork.

- 6) **Recommendations for Resolving Ethical Dilemmas:** Investigators who confront moral dilemmas in the course of conducting fieldwork must consider carefully the full range of issues involved in the problem. This would include details about the purpose of the study, the research design, the sponsors of the study, and the individual participants and community involved in the research. The researcher then must consider the cultural and social values represented in the ethical problem. When the primary ethical issues are determined, the investigator should outline a full range of strategies and consider the potential risks and benefits associated with each solution. The decision regarding course of action should maximize respect for the individual and group values identified. The vulnerability of research participants and the communities within which they live should be of paramount importance in resolving the ethical dilemma encountered.

#### Activity

You are faced with a situation in the field where writing about a particular instance from the society you are studying might negatively affect them yet you also realise that the information is vital to your work, what way will you adopt to finally come to a healthy solution?

## 1.6 SUMMARY

Fieldwork is a term which has been employed for nearly a century by anthropologists as a major methodological tool. The science of anthropology, at an early stage, was mostly speculative based on secondary sources of data collected by missionaries, traders, colonial administrators, travelers, adventurers, etc. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, anthropologists began to do field studies (though Morgan studied Iroquois earlier). The major emphasis on anthropological fieldwork was primarily British and American and in a limited way in Germany and France also. The invention of fieldwork was a characteristic method along with '**participant observation**'. Developing rapport and friendly relationship with people of simpler societies became the first step for a fieldworker. A systematic fieldwork involves various steps. Historical reconstruction, functionalism, a structural or cultural approach, and psychological anthropology are among the major frames of reference. There are some ethical aspects in fieldwork that all anthropologists should address to.

## References

- Bosk, C. 1985. "The Fieldworker as Watcher and Witness". *Hastings Center Report* 15: 10-14.
- Cassel, J., and S. Jacobs. 1987. (Ed). *Handbook on Ethical Issues in Anthropology*. Washington: American Anthropological Association.
- DuBois, Cora A. 1944. *The People of Alor: A Social-Psychological Study of an East Indian island*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.



Eaden, R.R., and T.L. Beauchamp. 1986. *A History and Theory of Informed Consent*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Evans-Pritchard, E.E. 1940. *The Nuer: A Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Neolithic People*. Oxford: Clarendon.

Kluckhohn, Clyde, and Dorothea Leighto. 1946. *The Navaho*. Oxford: Oxford University press.

Lewis, Oscar. 1961. *The Children of Sanchez: Autobiography of a Mexican Family*. New York: Paperback.

Marshall, P. 2005. "Fieldwork: Ethical Aspects". In *International Encyclopedia of Social and Behavioural Sciences* Vol. 8, ed. Neil J. Smelser and Paul B. Baltes, 5625-5628. Amsterdam: Elsevier.

Mead, Margaret. 1939. "Native Languages as Field-work Tools". *American Anthropologist* 41: 189-205.

Powdermaker, Hortense. 1968. "Fieldwork: Ethical Aspects". In *International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*, Vol. 5, ed. David L. Sills, 418-424. New York: The Free Press.

Shokeid, M. 2005. "Fieldwork: Ethical Aspects". In *International Encyclopedia of Social and Behavioural sciences* Vol. 8, ed. Neil J. Smelser and Paul B. Baltes, 5629-5632. Amsterdam: Elsevier.

### Suggested Reading

Casagrande, Joseph.B 1960. *In the Company of Man*. Harper and Row Inc.

Denzin, N.K. and Y.S. Lincoln. 1998. (Ed). *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Research Materials*. CA: Sage Publications.

Evans-Pritchard, E. E. 1951. *Social Anthropology*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul (chapter on Fieldwork and Empirical Tradition).

Srivatsava, V. K. (Ed) 2004. *Methodology and Fieldwork*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

### Sample Questions

- 1) What do you understand by fieldwork? What had been the various approaches in anthropology? Discuss.
- 2) Is fieldwork indispensable in anthropology? Explain.
- 3) Discuss the role of fieldwork tradition in the growth of anthropology.



---

## UNIT 2 ETHNOGRAPHY

---

### Contents

- 2.1 Introduction
  - 2.2 Theoretical Foundations or Criteria of Ethnographic Research
  - 2.3 Ethnography and its Aims, Objectives and Concepts
  - 2.4 Ethnography and its Methodology
  - 2.5 Ethnographic Process
  - 2.6 Ethnography and its Ethics
  - 2.7 Uses of Ethnography
  - 2.8 Summary
- Reference
- Suggested Reading
- Sample Questions

### Learning Objectives



Once you have gone through this unit, you should be able to:

- define each sub-unit of the subject matter thoroughly;
- understand the importance of each sub-unit in view of fieldwork study involved in recording the life styles of ethnic groups;
- perceive the fieldwork tradition in undertaking ethnographic studies;
- learn ethnography as an important qualitative research method in human cultural study at both micro-level and macro-level; and
- recognise the fundamentals of traditional fieldwork through ethnographic studies which form part and parcel of anthropology.

---

## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

---

Literally speaking, ethnography is the science of 'ethnos', that is, nations, people or cultures. It is a qualitative research method often used in social sciences, particularly in anthropology and sociology. It is, somewhat, a technique employed for procuring empirical data on human societies/cultures through methods like participant observation, interviews, questionnaires, etc. However, in the biological sciences, this type of study is called a "field study" or "case report", both of which are used as common synonymous for 'ethnography' which is the scientific study of human social phenomena and communities and hence considered a branch of socio-cultural anthropology. It practically involves fieldwork in which an ethnographer lives among the population being studied. He tries to maintain objectivity, and works with the informants, who are particularly knowledgeable, for a considerable period of time of a year or more. After completing fieldwork, the ethnographer writes about his or her experiences by integrating multiple disciplines such as biology to analyse available food supplies or geology to study the terrain and physical environment.



Though ethnography is visualised by many as a field of study on “other” people such as obscure native tribes of Andaman Islands in the Arabian Sea, ethnographers can also work in the most familiar environments such as semi-nomadic life styles of Kurivikaran in Tamil Nadu. Ethnography is about studying the entirety of the human experience, from hunting and food-gathering tribes in India to pub-goers in the metropolitan cities.

People who want to pursue ethnography as a career have to study cultural anthropology. If possible, they should make use of fieldwork opportunities in school to see whether they can enjoy doing fieldwork. A good ethnographer is expected to be highly sociable and accommodative, rapidly picks up new languages and instantly assesses a wide range of situations. Most importantly, ethnography is about observation and cataloging, and written communication skills are a strong asset for any one who wants to excel in this academic arena.

In general, ethnography and ethnology are considered to be the areas of interests of anthropologists who are generalists and interested in relationships between people and the physical, socio-political, personal, cultural and historical aspects of their life. Though ethnographic studies are thought to be the prerogative of anthropologists, ethnographic research, particularly critical ethnography, has become rather popular with modern developments in the social sciences, and especially with the advent of feminism and women’s studies.

---

## 2.2 THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OR CRITERIA OF ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH

---

The structure and principles of ethnographic research are derived from anthropology. They determine the perspective and direct theory and models of research. The following are the characteristics of ethnographic research.

### Culture

Ethnographers make a detailed study of culture which is a system shared by groups of people who practice and experience certain patterns of behaviour, values, norms and standards. They study culture as an entity in itself; they study how folk life is established, changed or destroyed and the ways in which culture is transmitted from one generation to another generation.

Further, the researcher tries to get first-hand information more from the respondent, who knows much about the research issue. This is important in the understanding of complex issues, ideal structures and deviations. His learning goes beyond the specific research topic and includes patterns of communication (including language), habits and cultural imperatives of the environment under investigation. All this requires, in many cases, long-term participant observation on the part of the ethnographer. While participating in the life of the community as a member of the group, the ethnographer acts as an instrument by involving the total personality in the research.

It is the everyday way of life, the everyday behaviour of people, etc. which is studied in ethnographic research. The researcher does not create and investigate experimental situations. The collection of data is done by the use of various methods available in anthropological research but the main ones remain observation and formal or informal conversations. Traditionally the emphasis is on studying a single community consisting of a small population. According



to the need, a researcher can also conduct investigation on a single person with the use of life history method. The data collected is finally given meaning by analysing and interpreting it on the basis of the functions and denotations of human deeds. This is done without much use of quantitative and statistical analysis.

### **Holism**

Ethnographers and anthropologists perceive human action in the context of the whole system, as individual actions are manifestations of cultural standards and principles of the large socio-cultural system. Therefore, many feminists have employed critical ethnography to explain invisibility, oppression and exploitation of women in the context of the family and society.

### **In-depth Studies**

Ethnographers are interested in making in-depth studies but not in “surface counting” survey data. They gather information by living for a longer period in the group they investigate and experiencing culture the way their subjects do. Their observation is naturalistic and captures social life as it unfolds in natural situations.

### **Chronology**

Anthropologists are conventionally interested in primitive cultures, whereas sociologists and other social scientists deal with modern societies and culture. Despite this division, ethnography as a method is still employed by anthropologists, sociologists and social scientists irrespective of their chronological orientation.

### **Interactive-Reactive Approach**

In order to study the research topic most effectively the ethnographer gathers first-hand information by employing a dynamic form of data collection and analysis that is based on flexibility, reactivity and self-correction. This enables him to adjust the approach, design and method.

### **Humanistic Perspective**

Ethnographic research is conducted towards humanistic concerns and values that throw light on the essence of culture in which people live and experiences gained through living in their culture.

### **Cross-Cultural Frame of Reference**

Ethnographic research makes use of previously collected information to understand other cultures and environments and to gear up the study to achieve more effective and realistic goals.

---

## **2.3 ETHNOGRAPHY AND ITS AIMS, OBJECTIVES AND CONCEPTS**

---

The principal aim and character of ethnographic study is the methods, concepts and application of procedural rules that can be applied to the study of social life under study. As such it tends to rely on a number of particular data collection techniques, naturalistic observation, documentary analysis and in- depth interviews, etc. However, the primary aim of ethnographic research begins



with the selection of a problem or topic of interest. This suggests the most appropriate approach, i.e., survey or experimental schedule or model to guide the study, primarily containing the fieldwork, basic anthropological concepts, data collection methods/techniques, analysis and a specific writing style. Another important aspect of doing ethnographic study is the theory or model building, a guide to practice and without which it can not be conducted.

The problem or research topic which is chosen by the ethnographer to interpret and define has to be a problem which should have basic research validity and applicability. A study of parent-child conflict can also become an applied ethnographic activity. The ethnographer should also keep in mind that the problem to be studied has to be clearly expressed, examined and written about. The epistemological foundation of a chosen model has to be comprehended by the ethnographer. This model for ethnographic research should be concerned with an archetype which allows reflection and analysis. Such paradigms are ones which are able to accept perspectives which are manifold containing multiple actualities.

A research design is constructed for ethnographic study. This contains the indispensable fundamentals of enquiry and also a blue print to theorize each step of her/his work. It mainly includes the sequences to be followed in order to create knowledge and understanding of the problem at hand. Therefore it is fieldwork which can be said to be the distinctive component of an ethnographic research design. An ethnographic field study may involve six months to two years of pragmatic study.

The ethnographic study begins with a survey period to learn the basics such as the native language, kinship ties, census information, historical data and the basic structure and function of the culture under study. The main issue in fieldwork is probing questions, observation, asking insightful questions and writing down what is seen and heard. Life histories of individuals can be particularly illuminating. While doing ethnographic study one must then cross-check, compare, and triangulate this information before it becomes a foundation on which a knowledge base is built. The best reason to leave the field is the belief that enough data have been gathered to describe the culture or problem convincingly and to say something significant about it.

Conducting fieldwork and analysis of data collected go hand in hand. Thus one actually begins to write one's ethnography during fieldwork itself. It is however reanalysed and restructured as one moves forward. This is a simpler process in applied anthropological fieldwork than in conventional fieldwork. In an applied scenario the employers or clients insist on minutes of each session conducted or short reports of the findings. While collecting ethnographic data, the fieldworker should possess both the qualities of an emic and etic perspective. This helps her/him to provide both the insider's view point and at the same time s/he allows scientific deductions. A standard ethnography contains the description of the history of the community, the geography, social institutions, politics, religious organisations, economic systems, educational provisions, enculturation, etc. Ethnographies can be written in various ways and formats depending on the content. Ethnographic findings are finally conveyed through documents, recordings, films, speeches, photographs etc.

The broader concept of ethnography is that it is the anthropological study about a particular culture. The most popular ideational definition of culture being its



cognitive nature which comprises of the ideas, beliefs and knowledge that characterise a particular group of people. Moreover, a cognitive ethnographer would ask members of the social group studied about how they define their reality and their subcategories of existence and how they define their symbols, etc. As such both material and ideational definitions are useful at different times in exploring fully how groups of people think and behave in their natural environment. The ethnographer should stay longer in a community, build rapport and probe deep into individual lives for learning about the sacred subtle elements of the culture. In this way ethnographers can learn about the intricacies of a subgroup or community in order to describe it in all its richness and complexity. As such, a cultural interpretation rests on a foundation of carefully collected ethnographic data and hence s/he can assume a holistic outlook in research to gain a comprehensive and complete picture of a social group which might include the group's history, religion, politics, economy and environment. On the other hand, by contextualising data observations can be placed into a larger perspective. In view of an emic perspective the recognition and acceptance of multiple realities about a group can make the ethnographer understand why people think and act in different ways as they do. The other anthropological concepts of ethnographic study include the etic perspective, the group's external, non-judgmental orientation that prevents the ethnographer from making inappropriate and unnecessary value judgment about what s/he observes, the intercultural and intra-cultural diversity, the traditional concepts of studying the structure of a group for knowing it's social organisation and the study of symbols and rituals of a social group to crystallise the critical cultural knowledge.

---

## **2.4 ETHNOGRAPHY AND ITS METHODOLOGY**

---

Ethnographic study tends to rely on a number of particular data collection techniques such as naturalistic observation, documentary analysis and in-depth interviews. When these methods are used it marks the ethnographer's application of study of people in a naturally occurring setting or 'field', in which the researcher participates directly where there is an intent exploration of meanings of these setting, their behavior and activities from the inside.

The prime method in ethnography being fieldwork (a variety of methods and techniques to ensure the integrity of the data) through selection and sampling of a place or people or program to study even though the ideal site for investigation of the research problem is not always accessible. The next step is to decide how to sample members of target population. It depends on the selection of approaches, first being the sources of information and its probability of little add to the study and who and what to study, which help to understand life in a given community. Resource constraints and deadlines may also limit the length of time for data gathering in the field-exploring, cross-checking and recording information. Apart from this, the first and foremost thing of ethnographic method of research being the ethnographer's entry through an introduction by a member of the same community which have a chilling effect on ethnographic research. The facilitator may be a chief, director, teacher, tramp, or gang leader who has some credibility with the group. A worthy reference and introduction to the people, reinforces the fieldworker's ability to investigate and collect data which is of good quality. Therefore if an internal and powerful person of the community introduces the fieldworker to the people, it helps in



warding off other unnecessary means of contact and lets the fieldworker maintain her/his independence. In order to enable fieldwork in a sequential manner the fieldworker has to partake of the following methods (participant observation and interviewing) and techniques (questionnaire, projecting, outcropping, proxemics, kinesics and folktales). They are briefly discussed below:

### **Participant Observation**

This contains participation in the lives of the people under study with maintenance of a professional distance that allows adequate observation and recording of data. It is the ethnographer's immersion in a culture to learn the language and seeing the pattern of behavior over time. A long-term residence helps the researcher to interlace the basic beliefs, fears, hopes and expectations of the people under study. This method sets the stage for more refined techniques such as projective techniques, questionnaires, etc. It can also help clarify the results of more refined instruments by providing a baseline of meaning and a way to reenter the field to explore the context for those (often unexpected) results (of validity and vitality). This requires close, long-term contact with people which include classroom observation, nonstop informal interviews, occasional substitute teaching, interaction with community members and using other research techniques such as long-distance phone calls, dinners, etc. In any case, the acquisition of ethnographic knowledge and understanding is a cyclical process. By penetrating the depth and skimming the surface an ethnographer can portray the cultural landscape in detail.

### **Interviewing**

This is one of the most important data gathering techniques which explains and puts into a larger context what the ethnographer sees and experiences. He requires verbal interaction and language is the commodity of discourse. General interview types include structured, semi-structured, informal and retrospective interviews. Formally structured and semi-structured interviews are verbal approximations of a questionnaire with explicit research goals. These interviews are most useful at the middle and end stages of a study for the collection of data about a specific question or hypothesis whereas informal interviews are most common in ethnographic work which seem to be casual conversations but useful in establishing and maintaining a healthy rapport and offer the most natural situations or formats for data collection and analysis. The interviews also contain survey or grand tour questions, specific questions, open-ended or closed-ended questions, protocols and strategies, informant questions, etc.

### **Questionnaires**

These are close to the approximations of structured interviews and they are perhaps the most formal and rigid form of exchange in the interviewing spectrum-the logical extension of an increasingly structured interview. However, these are qualitatively different from interviews because of the distance between the researcher and the respondent. Questionnaires do not have interactive nature.

### **Projective Techniques**

These supplement and enhance fieldwork. They are helpful for gathering cultural and psychological information from group members. The participant's responses usually reveal individual needs, fears, inclinations and general worldview. The Rorschach ink blot tests are a classic projective technique



and many anthropologists adopt these tests to fit the local context. As such these techniques can be clues to lead to further inquiry or one of several sources of information to support an ongoing hypothesis and only the ethnographer's imagination limits the number of possible projective techniques.

### **Outcroppings**

Outcropping is used in understanding the nuances of inner-city ethnography. Buildings, skyscrapers, burnt-out schools, worn out hospitals, malls, street art, urine traces in city streets, garbage, etc. tell us a lot about a city and the way it lives. The ethnographer takes note of such outcroppings to make an educated guess about the condition of a city, for example estimating the relative wealth or poverty of a locality. Such outcroppings are used in a larger context in ethnographic research.

### **Proxemics and Kinesics**

Proxemics is the analysis of socially defined distance between people. For example, the seating arrangement at a meeting can reveal social meaning. Kinesics focuses on body language. Sensitivity to body language can also be instrumental in ethnographic research. For example, a clenched fist, a student's head on a desk, a scowl, a blush, a student sitting at the edge of a chair etc., provide useful information to the observant fieldworker.

### **Folktales**

Folktales provide significant knowledge in both literate and non literate societies. Folktales are more often than not used as carriers of cultural norms and customs through generations. Such tales are created from situations, figures, surroundings which are local and relevant. Though the stories are not real the contents have incidences, subtleties, tinges which give an indication to the ethnographer of the real happenings in the profane, sacred, emotional and logical lives of people.

### **Ethnographic Equipments**

Pen and paper, notepads, computers, laptops, voice recorders, cameras etc., are the tools of ethnography which are the extensions of human instrument, aids to memory and vision. These useful devices can facilitate the ethnographic mission by capturing the rich detail and flavour of ethnographic experience and then help to organise and analyse the data.

#### **Activity**

Explain different methods of Ethnography.

## **2.5 ETHNOGRAPHIC PROCESS**

Ethnographic research follows certain procedural rules for studying people in naturally occurring settings or 'fields' by means of capturing their social meaning, economic activities, etc. When these procedural rules or methods are rooted at differential methodological frames of research process, its basic practice does not alter and the only difference lies between its methodological positions, status of the ethnography's representations of the field and the legitimacy of the criteria to evaluate them but not the practice of the method. The theme of ethnographic study comprises a series of actions hitherto known



as 'research process' that produce the end result of the study, and in ethnography it constitutes a naturalistic study of some aspect of social behaviour and meaning. Hence, these actions are collectively known as a process of research which can be coordinated and planned but these are kept together imaginatively, flexibly, often in a recognizable manner as to achieve the end result. In a way ethnographic study requires a research design but a careful one in a flexible manner.

The research design in ethnographic study mainly reflects the desire to achieve greater accuracy in the quantity of social and behavioural phenomena and it is an attempt to strengthen the social science objectivity. It should have a strategic plan with a broader research design that sets out for achieving good results. Hence, ethnographic research design is a plan that includes the following considerations:

- The outline and features of the topic addressed in the work, including aims and objectives of the research;
- Choice of research site or field;
- The resources available for the research including money, time, etc;
- The sampling of time and the events to be experienced in the field;
- Negotiation of access and trust in the field;
- The nature of the fieldworker's role(s) that is adopted when in the field and when interacting with informants;
- The question of gender and other: identities that have to be handled in the field;
- The form of analysis to be used, particularly whether qualitative computer packages are to be employed;
- Recording data unobtrusively; and
- Withdrawal from the field and the form(s) of dissemination that will be used to report the results.

During ethnographic study, the researcher has to follow certain data collection techniques as a central feature to fulfill her/his desire in the final presentation of the complete picture of a group's social history. To access social meanings, observe behaviour and work closely with the informants the following methods of data collection are relevant in addition to participant observation and in-depth interviewing.

### **Personal Documents**

Schools, colleges, various government departments, banks, police, archives, credit card companies, mobile phone companies etc., maintain records about us. These personal documents contain personal information which is used as the basis of various sorts of official statistics. However, it is necessary to know whether they are primary or secondary documents. Primary documents are the original sets of data compiled by the writer like a letter, recorded conversation in a tape recorder, transcript, etc. The secondary documents contain data obtained from second hand information like newspaper report, an edited letter of some one's letters or an edited transcript of conversation. All these documents provide data for the aspiring researcher.



## Studies of Natural Language

Language is mostly studied for the content of the talk. An area of study called 'pragmatics' or 'discourse analysis' examines the structure of the talk itself. Pragmatics is relevant as a data collection technique for three reasons; language is a form of social interaction; it purposes shared knowledge and is inseparable from its social setting; language and setting are closely tied; it is sometimes possible to reconstruct from a fragment of conversation the whole social world that produced it. For example, a single word '**consanguinity**' reveals a whole universe of kinship relations and social stereotypes.

## Vignettes

While collecting data, vignette serves as a technique that involves hypothetical or real circumstances being put to respondents for their comments. This technique is often used to explore sensitive topics like drug injecting, HIV risk, premarital sex, etc. The stories in the vignettes must appear plausible and real, should not depict eccentric and extraordinary events.

## Triangulation

The use of multiple methods is called triangulation which is a routine injunction to an ethnographic researcher. Denzin (1970) argued that triangulation should involve not just multiple methods (data triangulation) but also multiple investigators (investigator triangulation) and multiple methodological and theoretical frameworks (theoretical and methodological triangulation). Combined operations like this are feasible in ethnography. Triangulation always improves the quality of data and accuracy of ethnographic findings.

## Other Aspects of Significance

The other items that are important in an ethnographic study are the study of patterns of thought and behaviour which are a form of ethnographic reliability and hence ethnographers see pattern of thought and action that repeat in various situations and with various players as it is a form of analysis in ethnographic interpretation. The ethnographer begins with a mass of undifferentiated ideas and behaviour and then collects pieces of information. Comparing, contrasting and sorting gross categories and minutiae until a discernible thought or behaviour becomes identified. For example, the observation of a middle-class family might reveal several patterns such as work, children's care, rituals, festive occasions, food consumption, and quarrels etc., which form the pattern of everyday life.

Key or focal events that are recorded or written by the fieldworker can be useful for analysing an entire culture in every social group. It is a lens through which a culture is viewed in a classical way. Key events become a metaphor for the culture and also illustrate how participation, observation and analysis are inextricably bound together during fieldwork. Visual representations such as maps, flowcharts, organisational charts etc., are useful in ethnographic research. Matrices provide a simple, systematic graphic way to compare and contrast data. S/he can compare and cross-reference categories of information to establish a picture of a range of behaviours or thought categories and are also helpful to identify emerging patterns in the data. Another endeavour of an ethnographer is the crystallization of her/his thoughts at various stages throughout ethnographic study which may bring a conclusion, a novel insight, and an earth-shattering epiphany. Thus, analysis and interpretation has no single



form or stage in ethnography. Multiple analyses and forms of analyses are essential which takes place throughout any ethnographic assessment right from the selection of the problem to the final stages of writing. Analysis is interactive and often cyclical in ethnography.

### Activity

Write a short note on the process of an ethnographic field work.

## 2.6 ETHNOGRAPHY AND ITS ETHICS

As the ethnographic research is conducted among the living ethnic groups certain ethics have to be known and followed by the researcher. Before taking up fieldwork the researcher has to make clear about her/his goals to the members of the community with whom the subject matter lies so that s/he can gain the informed consent of the informants. It is also important to learn whether the group would prefer to be named in the written report of the research or given a pseudonym in order to offer the results of the research if the informants would like to read it. Another important aspect of ethics is that the researcher/s must be sure that the research does not harm or exploit the characteristic feature of that group among whom the study is undertaken. As the ethnographers do not work in a vacuum and often meddle into people's innermost secrets, sacred rites, achievements and failures, they should subscribe to a code of ethics that preserve the participants' rights, facilitates communication in the field and leaves the door open for further research. In addition, they have to be careful in trampling the feelings of natives or desecrate what the culture calls sacred. In this respect the ethical sensitivity on the part of ethnographers ensures not only the rights of the people but also the integrity of the data and a productive, enduring relationship between the people and the researcher. Professionalism and a delicate step demonstrate the ethnographer's deep interest, respect, administration and appreciation for the people's way of life.

Ethics pervades every stage of ethnographic work and therefore ethnographers must make intelligent and informed decisions that satisfy the demands of science and morality. Ethnographers must formally or informally seek consent (for taking photographs, tape recording, etc) to conduct fieldwork. It depends on the nature of request and the consent changes according to the context of the study. Honesty is another important aspect that the ethnographers keep in mind while collecting data and must be open about their task, explaining what they plan to study, how and why and hence deceptive techniques are unwarrantable. Ethnographers need the trust of the people they work with to complete their task, as actions speak louder than words. Ethnographic descriptions should be usually detailed and revealing and hence the ethnographers must exercise judgment in every instance in which an individual's identity becomes public. Ethnographers should offer the result of their research in its final form as a type of reciprocity but not become an obtrusive, contaminating or unethical activity.

As one advances in fieldwork there comes a stage towards the end where the ethnographer comes in contact with issues of what is known as guilty knowledge and dirty hands. '**Guilty knowledge**' is knowledge about illegitimate and criminal activities. '**Dirty hands**' is a term where the ethnographer cannot come out guiltless of misconduct. An ethnographer has ethical responsibility



to the community studied hence s/he is not supposed to divulge such cases for own gain in her/his research work.

Ethics and quality are also intrinsic elements in ethnographic work. Ethnographers have to maintain the quality of the process as well as outcome of their efforts. A lack of rigour or energy at any stage will diminish the quality and accuracy of the final product. Similarly, any decay in human relations during fieldwork will have an adverse impact on the ethnography. Any of these deficiencies can endanger the group under study through misrepresentation and misunderstanding.

Meeting scientific and ethical obligations to participants, colleagues, institutional sponsors, and tax payers requires rigorous efforts. A rigorous effort contributes meaning to a knowledge base. Thus, ethics guide the first and last steps of ethnography. Ethnographers stand at ethical cross roads throughout their research. This fact of ethnographic life sharpens the senses and ultimately refines and enhances the quality of the endeavour.

---

## **2.7 USES OF ETHNOGRAPHY**

---

It is worth recalling that ethnography is a method of approach for studying an ethnic group on all aspects of its life. There are three basic usages of this study which are explained below:

### **Knowledge Generation**

In the first use, it is an attempt to understand society by the generation of knowledge in a rigorous and systematic manner in order to produce generic propositional answers to questions about social life and organization. It means that ethnography can generate knowledge on a variety of subject matters relevant to different academic disciplines and to many occupations and working lives. Ethnographic enquiry can describe the folk structures of the group or way of life in the form of field realities, i.e., 'native' social meanings in the field, examine meanings of events and things concerning to the people under study, and can advocate research models in order to improve the behaviour of the people in the setting.

### **Theory-Building in Ethnographic Research**

In the case of second usage, ethnography helps in theory-building. A theory is a set of interrelated propositions about human affairs and the social world that explain their regularities and properties. The generation of theory is sometimes listed as one of the criteria to judge ethnography. Some ethnographers have sought to produce nomothetic studies which aim at abstract generalisations and focus on the discovery of general patterns and the structural regularities in everyday behaviour. On the contrary, ideographic studies seek to explore the unique features of an individual case in order to discover social meaning it has for the participants. As such theory evolves during actual research and it does this through continuous interplay between analysis and data collection and theory and data.

### **Application of Ethnographic Research in Policy-Making**

The third advantage of ethnographic research is its application to policy-making. Application of qualitative research reinforces the growth of applied ethnography



as it increases the chances of policy makers using ethnographic data in policy decisions which in turn make them more likely to support and fund future ethnographic research. Hence, the main features of ethnographic data are their richness and depth and so ethnography is premised on the belief that this is vital. As such, it can help to provide the worldview and social meanings of those affected by some policy or intervention strategy; it can help to provide the views of those thought to be part of the problem that the policy is intended to address; it can be used to evaluate the effects of policy; it can be used to identify the unintended consequences of policy initiatives; it can be used to provide cumulative evidence that supplies policy makers with a body of knowledge that is used to inform decision making and to supplement narrow quantitative information and add flesh to some factual data used to inform decision-making, etc.

In the area of feminism, ethnography serves as a powerful methodological tool, as it relies on interpretation and inter-subjective understanding between researchers and informants and aims at (1) documenting the lives and activities of women, (2) understanding the narratives of women from their points of view and (3) conceptualising women's behaviour as a byproduct of socio-cultural contexts.

#### Activity

Explain the uses of Ethnography.

## 2.8 SUMMARY

In the field of social science research ethnographic study attains utmost importance, as it is a record of a society in actual situation. It is a tool to be used for ensuring archaeological anthropology, a combination of anthropology and archaeology of past human history. It can be useful for studying right from the higher classes of society to the lowest strata in order to answer certain untenable questions. However, it requires methods and techniques to be followed for tapping good results which can explain the possible answers or understanding certain social groups in actual situations like daily events, social customs, rituals, inherent but hidden practices that can not be noticed or known through books, journals and other study materials, etc. Hence, ethnographic study has a significant position in social science research which requires an immense understanding of the subject matter of the social groups among which it has to be carried out. This is an important tool to be used in the post-modern and global moment which can still demonstrate how local processes are transformed under the pressure of globalisation and show how these global processes are themselves mediated by local factors to create localised variations and particularities. As such along with the persistence of local specialised social meanings, a form of ethnographic realism survives in the post-modern situations under the influence of post-postmodern practices and hence it stands as a technique used for ever, especially in the fields of anthropology, folklore, tribal studies, archaeology, etc.

## Reference

Denzin, N. 1970. *Sociological Methods- A Source Book*. Chicago: Aldine.



### Suggested Reading

Brewer, J.D. 2000. *Ethnography*. Buckingham and Philadelphia: Open University Press.

Hammersley, M. and P. Atkinson. 1983. *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*. London: Tavistock.

Kenneth S. Goldstein 1992. *A Guide for Fieldworkers in Folklore*. Pennsylvania: Folklore Associates Inc.

Rynkiewicz, M.A. and Spradley, J.P. 1976. *Ethics and Anthropology: Dilemmas in Fieldwork*. New York: John Wiley.

White, W.F. 1955. *Street Corner Society: The Social Structure of an Italian Slum*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

### Sample Questions

- 1) What is ethnography? Explain its importance.
- 2) Write about the aims, objectives and concepts of ethnographic research.
- 3) What are the anthropological concepts of ethnographic study?
- 4) Examine the methodology of ethnography.
- 5) Why should ethnographers have ethics? What are the principles of ethics that ethnographers must follow?
- 6) Explain how ethnography is useful in social science research.



---

## UNIT 3    TECHNIQUES, METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

---

### Contents

- 3.1    Introduction
- 3.2    Techniques
- 3.3    Methods
- 3.4    Methodology
- 3.5    The Scientific Method
- 3.6    Historical Method
- 3.7    Comparative Method
- 3.8    Survey
- 3.9    Summary

References

Suggested Reading

Sample Questions

### Learning Objectives



Having gone through this unit, you should be able to:

- understand the relevance and importance of fieldwork in anthropology;
- distinguish between technique, method and methodology;
- understand the links of the above terms with the scientific method;
- describe the importance of the comparative method in anthropology; and
- distinguish between the historical method, comparative method and survey.

---

### 3.1    INTRODUCTION

---

In this unit we will learn about the tradition of anthropology, which is vital to take the study forward. This is fieldwork. Before we enter into the main discussion, let us first provide an introduction to fieldwork as a tradition in anthropology. The fieldwork tradition in anthropology has been one of the foremost breakthroughs in human research. For the first time, a methodology was developed for first hand contact with people from the field and the means and ways of contacting them. As a result of this, a sea of change occurred in the way field data was collected, organised and thought about. A whole new methodology emerged as a result.

This new way of collecting human data emerged from quite simple beginnings. Initially, field analysts of social data put together their ideas regarding the origins of quaint and odd human practices of 'other' cultures by putting in data collected from reports written by others. The origins of these reports show that they may not have had correct data. For instance, data from early sailors,



travelers and missionaries were used. Some of the social data used were thus fictionalised, mythologised or even imagined accounts of the lives of people. Many of these early anthropologists worked in museums, where they saw the by-products of human culture without any human contact with those who had produced them. Using this material, they began to speculate on the origins of many human characteristics like family, marriage, kinship and politics in order to search for their origins.

This search for origins, coupled with the Victorian (since this was the period of Queen Victoria's reign in Britain) industrial worldview, led the colonial powers to hypothesize a series of evolutionary stages. All of these stages ended with the final and best of stages – which was the Western world at that time. Many, like Kipling, felt that this kind of a lifestyle had to be the best, and thus the others being described were more 'primitive' and from a past period. These communities, they felt had not advanced enough in their evolution. Thus they used the terms 'barbarian', 'primitive' and 'backward' for these communities.

These theoreticians were called the 'armchair' anthropologists or classical evolutionists. Except for Louis Henry Morgan, none had done any fieldwork. They included anthropologists like Edward Burnett Tylor, Sir James Frazer, Henry Maine, McLennan, Ferguson, among others. Their 'conjectural history' of human social evolution became a part of anthropology and their ideas were used by many other social scientists, including Marx and Engels. Engels found the work of L.H. Morgan to be very useful and his Primitive Society was used as a background for developing the idea of 'modes of production' by him and Karl Marx. The Soviet state republished Morgan's work and sold it cheaply all over the world as the epitome of new research in social science.

However, the flaws in the theory could not be overlooked. When one looked at societies, one felt that looking at them from this perspective would be to wrong them. Many were very 'advanced' in their ideas, perhaps more than what was even imagined in the Western or more developed nations at that time. Also, such societies seem to be more integrated within themselves, and living happily.

As a result of these ideas, Bronislaw Malinowski, a Polish migrant from Britain started fieldwork among the Polynesian islands in the Pacific Ocean. He conducted fieldwork for over one year among the Trobriand Islanders and eventually wrote a series of books beginning with *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922). For the first time, he described in detail the life of the community in detail that captured their struggle in overcoming everyday problems, their essential humanity and the intricate detail of the ideas that structured their society. A new methodology of doing research thus started emerging. Malinowski called this participant observation, where anthropologists lived with the community through at least one calendar year, living with and participating in the community's life in order to understand it better. Later investigators amended this to mean that one had to stay with the community for one year over all the seasons and months of the year, with each stay being for a period of three months at the least.

There has been much that has been celebrated about regarding this technique in anthropological technique. Many claimed that it was an answer to finding out the nitty-gritty of everyday life among the people studied by anthropologists. Eventually, this anthropological technique became very useful as one of the most intense methods of fieldwork interaction between the people being studied



and the investigator/s. As a result, others who were not anthropologists started emulating this technique. Unfortunately, without this background many used it piecemeal, neither maintaining field studies for a full year nor being as intense in their researches or as detailed as was the original intention.

Even as these developments were taking place, some anthropologists complained that this technique created 'subjects' and 'informants' out of the people and thus it was wrong, politically, to just stress on forcing oneself on the people when they may not accept this role of the researcher. They claimed that the main role here was that of the observer and not of the participant. They claimed that the political imbalance thus created could be redressed by reversing these roles, by having an observing participant in the field situation.

Whatever be the ultimate outcome of this argument, participant observation has become popular among a wide section of the public and has grown in its usage to a large variety of areas.

In the portion below we describe the different aspects of fieldwork which are involved to make it viable.

---

## 3.2 TECHNIQUES

---

The word technique was first known to be used in about 1817 by the French, meaning 'technical' from the Greek *technikos*. As a noun, it came to mean a method or systematic procedure of accomplishing a desired aim or a body of technical methods as in a craft, art or scientific method. In other words, it was a particular way of doing something, especially where one had to learn special skills through which one could do something practical. Thus, it was a systematic procedure, formula or routine by which a task could be accomplished. It was also closely linked to proficiency, where skillfulness in the command of fundamentals deriving from practice and familiarity was the norm. It could also be a method used in dealing with something, thus linking it with approach, attack, course, line, *modus operandi*, plan, procedure or tack. It could also include natural or acquired facility in a specific activity, thus bringing it closer to ability, adeptness, art, command, craft, expertise, expertness, knack, mastery, proficiency, skill or know-how.

---

## 3.3 METHODS

---

The word method came from the medieval French *methode*, or the Latin *methodus* meaning "way of teaching or going". The Greek *methodus* means "method of inquiry" or "scientific inquiry" or "pursuit, or following after". It is formed from two words, 'meta' meaning "after" and 'hodos', meaning "a travelling way". It has since then come to mean a way of doing something, especially in a systematic way, implying an orderly logical arrangement. This is often in the form of steps. Hence, it is a logical process, a regular and systematic way of accomplishing something, mode of inquiry, body of skills or techniques, orderly arrangement of parts or a series of steps by which a task is completed. It involves the procedures and techniques characteristic of a particular discipline or a field of study. It could also be a discipline that deals with the principles and techniques of scientific inquiry.



In other words, unless these terms are used in more specific and specified ways, they tend to merge together and sound similar. Some of these terms are also linked to a past baggage of dogma and belief. To get over such problems it is always better to look through these terms again and understand what they really mean and how they are linked to each other. Each word is often linked to others using a variety of different meanings. The context decides the meaning. Hence, we have to specify the context and decide which of the given meanings we are to assign to the word used.

Many believe that science is universally clear and so is the scientific method. However, this is not entirely true. The scientific method is not a universal mode of understanding, or discourse. It is often about general guidelines based on which each problem-solver/scientist negotiates a pathway. The scientific method is often referred to as a "hypothetico-deductive method".

The deductive method is where an individual assumes a truth to be present, and attempts to prove it to be true. If the evidence is found, then the truth is asserted, if not then another deduction is made and the same procedure is carried out. As a result, the truth of the assertion is then used in other contexts. If a similar situation exists, then it is claimed that the same results hold true.

The inductive method, on the other hand, is not so confident. It does not begin by asserting a truth and then proving it. Rather, it checks out a situation in all its aspects, before making any assumptions. Even after a set of assumptions have been checked and found to be true, no generalisation is immediately made. A general statement is only made in this case after the same statement has been found to be true in many different contexts and situations. Hence, by gradually sifting through all the data, it is hoped that generalisations will eventually stand out.

Science usually uses a mix of these two methods which has come to be called the "hypothetico-deductive method" where a set of hypotheses are deduced from previous researches or from one's own experiences. These are then tested. Hence, scientific knowledge is attained from testing hypotheses or theories by logically deducing hypotheses from them, using experiment and careful observation to test the hypotheses, and revising theories that lead to incorrect predictions. Hence, we see that the scientific method is a series of steps scientists use to acquire, test and describe the world around them.

In the first step, the questions are asked in the form of a hypothesis. This is like a working explanation of a natural process. In the next stage, patterns that link up observations are observed and noted. Based on these observations and patterns, a working hypothesis or theory is formulated, which specifies a more formal set of assumptions put forth to explain observations and natural phenomena. After this step, experiments are specifically designed to test whether the theory is applicable in all contexts and situations. There is constant refinement, revision and adjustment. This 'fine-tuning' is the crux of the scientific method.

Some would claim that a method is a systematic presentation of a system of work while technique is a procedure. A method seems not to be derived and common to the entire group of disciplines, like the social sciences. In studying any social phenomena, different kinds of methods may be used like the comparative method, historical method, etc. However, techniques may be interview, schedule, questionnaire, and so on. In order to avoid fallacies and to



make it sound, a method is tested and specific steps are undertaken in the case of a method. On the other hand, techniques keep getting modified, and are changed according to the requirements of different contexts. A method aims at getting to systematize knowledge, while a technique attempts to collect knowledge in a systematic manner.

Thus there seems to be only one scientific method, rather than thinking of them as being plural. Scientific investigations are carried out under this method using different techniques.

---

### 3.4 METHODOLOGY

---

The word methodology came from the Latin *methodologia*. It was first used in about 1790-1800 AD. The word methodology has often been confused with method, hence some people have claimed that methodology is a pretentious way of saying “method”.

Methodology is the analysis of the principles of methods, rules and postulates employed by a discipline. Methodology may incorporate the study of methods that are, can be, or have been applied within a discipline. In other words, it is the study or description of methods. Methodology does not specify any specific method, rather it specifies several processes that require to be followed. These processes are like an overall framework. They may have parts or be in sequence or may be broken down into sequences. These sequences may also change. Yet, to complete the work, in one form or the other, these sequences need to be completed.

So, methodology could be said to be a description of the process, which might be expanded to include a philosophically consistent collection of theories, inquiry procedure, concepts or ideas related to a discipline or a field of inquiry. Methodology may also include the analysis of the principles or procedures of inquiry in a particular field. It includes the study of the principles that underlie the organisation of the various sciences and how scientific inquiry may be conducted. This is why Mason Cooley said, “methodology is applied ideology”.

Methodologies are often a step-by-step set of procedures detailed out for doing a piece of work. They may include diagrams for documenting the results of the procedure. They may also include an objective, sometimes quantified set of criteria for determining whether the results of the procedure are acceptable; a kind of “quality control”.

Thus, we see that methodology is a general study of method in fields of inquiry like science, history, mathematics, psychology, philosophy and ethics, among others. It may then be felt by some scientists that there is one true mode of inquiry which is a guarantee of finding the truth. The task of the philosopher would be to find the correct method for any discipline and to ensure that “quality control” is maintained by keeping out other methods.

This belief was part of the earlier period of science and is called the positivist philosophy of science. This was started by the Father of Sociology, Auguste Comte. However, today, few scientists see this as the true idea behind science. This idea claims that every kind of science and knowledge needs to be strictly ‘objective’ and non-partisan, without bias. It thus seems to think that there is a logic in the system that we cannot find out just by doing things naturally and



normally but needs to be analysed. Comte also assumed that this kind of logic was set up as if it were before the basics of the thing to be analyzed. Hence, he called it a priori, a kind of 'first principle'.

However, this kind of pushed the credibility of what was possible. Later philosophers and scientists agreed that reality could not be proscribed by 'first principles' but was often contingent upon the context and how events developed. A changing reality meant that science was also free to change. Today, though science still believes in objectivity, subjective elements are given grudging acceptance after much thought.

What does this do to methodology? Methodology has become more modest. It analyses the methods that have been actually adopted at various historical stages of investigation of different issues. It does not criticize but keeps creating systematic overviews of what the methods are at any given point of time and how they might be classified and understood.

The question then arises, are local research methods never to be important enough to have their say? This is not so. In the community of researchers who are investigating one kind of phenomenon, there are often disputes regarding the accusation of a method being called unsound or unscientific. According to present practitioners of the discipline, logic and philosophy would not provide such disputes with any guidelines or weapons for addressing the issue. In fact, current researches show that such disputes are more about political action for control and power within the discipline rather than about policing the boundaries of the discipline.

In determining the structure of each discipline, we may consider the proper object of the discipline, the manner in which it develops, the type of statements or generalisations that emanate from it, its philosophical foundations or assumptions and its relation with other disciplines and its applications. Thus, methodology is a kind of guidelines rather than a formula for producing a result. It is a set of practices that could lead to appropriate questioning and to the right kind of changes.

Science and logical reasoning has been obsessed with methodology. Sometimes, a group of scientists feel, the way the experiment has been conducted has become more important than the actual experiment and its results. Paul Feyerabend would go against this kind of methodology. In *Against Method*, he claims that: "One might get the impression that I recommend a new methodology which replaces induction by counter-induction and uses a multiplicity of theories, metaphysical views, fairy tales, instead of the customary pair theory/observation. This impression would certainly be mistaken. My intention is not to replace one set of general rules by another such set: my intention is rather to convince the reader that all methodologies, even the most obvious ones, have their limits" (1975: 23).

---

### **3.5 THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD**

---

The scientific method is a general set of procedures or steps through which a systematic approach is developed. A series of steps characterise the scientific method. In the first instance the investigator makes an observation of a phenomenon. This gives the investigator insight and indicates that some further work needs to be carried out in this regard. This dissatisfaction with the current



state of things is redressed when the investigator decides to take the experiment to the next stage and formulates the problem more precisely. This may or may not include the formulation of a hypothesis that links up to a theory.

The next stage would be to develop and apply a design for the solution of the problem and for testing the hypothesis. Next, the results would be subjected to further analysis and tests. Based on these, and on the literature available, a discussion of these results leads to a set of conclusions and their linkage to the hypotheses framed. These conclusions are then integrated in the body of knowledge available within the area of research. Thus, the scientific method is based on these basic ideas that look for the underlying cause-effect relationships between two or more variables.

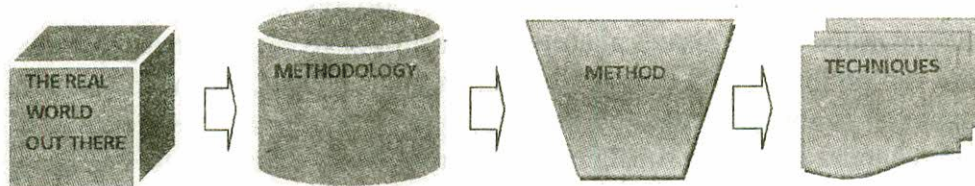


Fig. 3.1: Going from the Real World to the Scientific Method

Some researchers have classified research methods into survey, historical and experimental methods. Basically, a research method may attempt to explain a general category of phenomena or it may include a special category. The latter kind of research is usually more common. These special categories may be investigated using qualitative or quantitative methods. Qualitative methods include social surveys, historical method, comparative method and structural-functional methods. The quantitative methods may include inductive-deductive methods, case studies, sociometry, social distance scales and community studies.

### 3.6 HISTORICAL METHOD

One of the early anthropologists to use the term historical method was Franz Boas. He pointed at the limitations of comparative method, and suggested for use of comparisons within a small well defined geographical area. His method is known as historical particularism. Evans-Pritchard stressed on the importance of history in anthropology. He argued that functioning of society cannot be understood without understanding its history. His argument is that social anthropology could very well be a kind of historiography in itself.

The historical method is primarily concerned with the past and attempts to trace the past as a means of understanding the present. It can be sub-divided into the true historical, legal and documentary types. Social scientists, especially philosophers, social-psychiatrists and historians use such methods. Today they are also being used by those who look into the past of the discipline and historians of science. They see society as a dynamic organism with its structure and functions undergoing steady changes and sudden transformations.

Social scientists often wish to note how changes affect their population or group or community that they have been studying. It seems that all groups undergo some changes over time, and this leads to changes in their roles, statuses, personalities and institutions. Thus, historical research would involve scientific modes of inquiry to historical problems. It demands standards of



careful methodology and reliability of the kind which characterizes other kinds of research.

Historical research is undertaken primarily to gain a better understanding of the present. Most current events seem to have a past historical beginning and understanding these help to understand the underlying processes that frame the present behavior of individuals in society. Also, the historical method helps us to more accurately understand the historical past in order to frame ideas relating to the present and to the pre-historic past.

Initially, it was assumed that history meant that one had to just find out the correct material from a variety of sources and put together the truth. Over the years, it has come to be recognised that such historical material is always subjective and biased and that history is always subject to different interpretations. Thus, historical accounts are also different in perspective and there can no longer be a true or correct perspective. Thus, the 'history of the conqueror' is always written by the conqueror. In recent years Ranajit Guha started a trend in writing subaltern history, the history of those who had been marginalized by the majority and the mainstream. For Edward Said, history was often written by the West and they suffered from peculiar biases when they studied Eastern societies which he clustered together under the title of *Orientalism* (1978).

Thus, history then seemed to be an unending project rather than the finite one which had been envisaged earlier. It was seen to be a very useful form of critical analysis of social systems and their concomitant societies. A historical study would thus be a very holistic study of social systems in order to uncover the processes of social change. On the other hand, much more specific probes and forays into history, that look for specific backgrounds of change occurring in the past of specific events or kinds of behavior would normally conduct a historical survey, a study which would have a much limited purview.

A historical study is likely to have many problems and limitations. There is a dearth of much reliable data. There is also the problem of the availability of records in the public sphere. Many records may have been destroyed or lost. Also many of the records still remain secret or locked up in private collections which are often outside the knowledge of the public at large. Many of the records are not kept preserved correctly and as a result much of it is being lost on a daily basis. Without proper keeping of documents, they keep getting dispersed. It then becomes impossible for a researcher limited by time and money to trace them out and access them over a long period of time and space. There may be inaccuracies in the time frames chosen by the researcher. As a result, the events that are required may be outside the time frame chosen by the researcher and thus the true picture of events may remain concealed. Testing, verifiability and reliability of the data is often questionable and limited. Calculation and measurement of data available under these conditions may be difficult if not impossible. As stated earlier, there may be inherent biases in the data that may get overlooked. Historical writing has to become selective. Thus, what is selected and what is left out is a matter of subjective bias. Also, not every event gets recorded and always much remains unknown. There is always the problem of sampling.

Thus historical data may be said to be accurate and reliable when they are presented as complexes of social forces, shown in order that social phenomena



meaningfully depict intricate social processes, and when all the institutions of society go to the making of the analysis as an integrated whole. Reliable historical data may come from government sources, from more recent studies rather than from older ones, data which exhibits more detail than data which shows less detail, as well as data which may be verified through other sources.

The historical method may help us collect better quality of comparative data, since history provides a much diversified scope of data. A realistic idea of the grounding of social events may be collected using this method. The knowledge of circumstances and conditions may be obtained in much greater detail using this method.

A section of researchers within anthropology are much concerned with the growth and origin of the discipline from the historical past. They link the social context of past societies to show how historical processes were socially embedded practices. Such anthropologists who worked on these areas include Fred Voget, Margaret Hodgkin, Regna Darnell and George W. Stocking. Jr. Stocking started a journal called History of Anthropology which deals with such issues.

In India such historical studies in anthropology have been conducted by L.P. Vidyarthi, Dharni Sinha, among others. The reconstruction of tribal histories by K.S Singh can be mentioned here. He studied tribal movements, state formation among tribes, etc. His approach was a combination of ethnography with sensitivity to historical reconstructions. B.S Cohn studied the impact of British rule on Benares state in India. In using historical approach to understand colonial impact, he went against the dominant trend of microscopic synchronic studies.

However, it must be remembered that each and every sub-division of anthropology requires some historical study and analysis.

---

### **3.7 COMPARATIVE METHOD**

---

Anthropology is known as a comparative discipline. Anthropology started as the study of 'other cultures' and comparisons formed integral part of it. Anthropologists compare cultural traits, cultural complexes, institutions, cultural wholes, tribes and civilizations. Comparisons lead to typologies, concepts, inferences, generalisations, and theories. It is the comparative method that has led to the theory of organic evolution, through comparative anatomy and taxonomy. Evolutionists are known for the use of comparative method. Though, Comparative method is known as the method of evolutionists, others like diffusionists made use of it. Structural functionalist Radcliffe-Brown called his method of illustrative comparisons as comparative method.

The first formulation of what was to become the comparative method in anthropology was made in 1761 by Kames. However, in 1889, it was consciously used as a method for the first time by E.B. Tylor in a paper entitled 'On a method of investigating the development of institutions; applied to laws of marriage and descent' at a meeting of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain.

There was a very strong belief in the scientific method among the public. This was propagated mainly by the Positivist School; one of whose founders was the French sociologist Auguste Comte.



The early anthropologists gradually realised that cross-cultural analyses were fraught with problems. For instance, certain features of the 'primitive' people were as 'advanced' as those of 'civilized' ones.

This problem was tackled by dividing up cultures into entities called traits. Each of these traits was then assigned a typical developmental sequence. This is seen in the works of the diffusionists and in the culture-area approach. Hence, traits could be taken in isolation and the evolutionary sequence of such traits could then be used to assign which features of any culture need 'progress' to reach the ideal of Western civilization. This kind of evolutionary trend was seen in the works of Morgan and Tylor, among others.

The objectivity in the sciences was sought to be mirrored in anthropology. Coupled with the inductive approach, it meant that all ethnographic data was assumed to be collected in an objective manner. It became simple to chop up the cultural whole into trait-sized pieces for cross-cultural comparisons. In this way diverse traits from around them could be fitted into a few pigeonholes. Memorable generalisations from such work included that of Frazer.

Franz Boas, in a reaction against 'armchair' anthropology and indiscriminate theorising, proposed the concept of historical particularism. It did not waver from the inductive approach used in the sciences, but proposed that all cultures are unique and particular. Each culture has to be studied in its historical context, and cannot be compared with any other culture.

This collection of endless streams of ethnography without any attempt at deductive, unifying, grand theories was disliked by many. From this grew the attempts to see cultures as organic entities as in functionalism and structural-functionalism. It was felt that if traits were not comparable entities, then institutions like kinship, family, marriage, etc. were, and therefore could be studied cross-culturally. Similar objections to comparisons come from cultural relativism. Cultural relativists point that units that are being compared are part of the respective cultures. Parts of culture are functionally integrated and inter-related. It is argued that parts cannot be torn out of the totality of context for the purpose of comparison.

Attempts were made to analyse the universal categories found in every culture. One extreme was reached by George Peter Murdock, who set up the Human Relations Area Files (HRAF) in which common categories of cultures were filed together. As newer and newer material arrived, it was broken up and entered into the files at the appropriate places. Even now, it is still one of the most basic of references that may be consulted by any anthropologist working on cross-cultural analyses. According to Murdock, the justification for such cross-cultural analyses could be put down in seven points as follows:

- 1) Culture is learned
- 2) Culture is inculcated
- 3) Culture is social
- 4) Culture is ideational
- 5) Culture is gratifying
- 6) Culture is adaptive
- 7) Culture is integrative



These seven postulates of culture indicated that there should logically be remarkable similarities between human beings all over the world. Therefore, the cross-cultural studies should reveal the underlying similarities of human beings all over the world. This kind of tautological thinking, goes on to state that such cross-cultural studies would logically elaborate hypotheses, and check on the validity of theorems. Then, it would critically analyse the results from an area-wise or distributional point of view since a valid hypothesis should hold true in any area. Exceptions or negative cases could then be examined in detail.

In France, the search for cross-cultural features was taken to another extreme. Lévi-Straussian Structuralism broke up words and cultural sections into phonemes, morphemes, and the like, in the search for the underlying *reality* of the human mind.

To recapitulate, the proponents of the cross-cultural approach would claim that the ideal natural science paradigm can only be followed by large-scale cross-cultural generalisations conducted through detailed and meticulous cross-cultural studies. They assume that parts separated from cultures do form analysable entities.

On the other hand, the opponents of cross-cultural studies would claim that culture cannot be separated into its various components. If separated, they lose their identity as part of a culture. Therefore, cultures can only be studied separately and understood as historically formed units. A new twist to this argument was added by the ethno-methodologists. They argued that a culture can only be understood from the view of a participant, not as an objective outsider. Hence, all ethnographies are non-comparable, uniquely interpreted works. Their ultimate validity can only be seen from the acceptance or rejection of such a work by a person from the culture described, as an accurate description of that culture.

The large variety of cross-cultural studies appears to fall into two broad categories. Idiographic studies focus on particularistic details located in time and space. On the other hand nomothetic studies focus on law-like generalisations of societies valid over space and time.

On the small scale, Fred Eggan's method of controlled comparison would be more suitable. In this case, the investigator "*knows almost all of the culture inventory and the ecological and archaeological bases shared by all the peoples in the study; he has only to explain the relatively few differences. In such a study the investigator has less chance to distinguish an idiographic relationship from a nomothetic one.....*" (Driver, 1973: 328).

Larger generalisations do not require such detailed data. They require more quantifiable data that can then be put through statistical tests. However, statistical correlations are not definitive indicators of causal relationships. This problem was put together specifically by Galton. In 1961, Naroll gave a statistical solution to the problem based on a three-fold division. He put historical associations and functional associations on two poles of a continuum. The third association fell in-between the two and was called semi-diffusional/mixed historical-functional. This, however, does not solve the argument against Weberian *ideal types* which need not exist as a real type but is an average of the ones that exist.



Hence, the comparative method is not without its problems. It is still used, however, in many studies in order to gain a better idea of comparisons between people of various regions. However, it must be remembered here that the comparative method is possible only through the data collected during fieldwork where individuals are the focus of attention. Anthropologists use a variety of techniques to approach these individuals – the ‘others’.

We would question then, who are the ‘others’? In earlier studies, it were the ‘primitives’. Later, the focus shifted to peasants. Still later, the focus shifted to urban areas. Anthropology, by its decision to study someone creates a subject-object dichotomy; it is the anthropological enterprise that creates the ‘other’. The ‘other’ may be people from a remote and far away land. They can also be the next door neighbour or the members of one’s family; and within the ‘other’, the anthropologist meets parts of himself/herself.

---

### **3.8 SURVEY**

---

**Primary Data** is that which the investigator or the researcher collects himself or herself. **Secondary Data** is collected from reference sources like the library, etc. The second method is used for comparative methods. Anthropologists, generally, prefer to work with primary data.

There are two main techniques of data collection. These are **Intensive Fieldwork Methods** and **Survey Methods**.

Intensive fieldwork methods include observation, interview, case-study and genealogy. Survey methods are divided into questionnaires, schedules and interview guides. Both these methods may be rounded off by content analysis.

Descriptive studies are primarily to describe accurately a given phenomenon with a view to testing hypotheses or a hypothesis and the relationships among its different dimensions. The objective of such studies is to work out the characteristics of a population. These studies can be further categorized into two:

- a) **Surveys:** A survey is carried out on a small unit of the entire population.
- b) **Census:** A census is a study of the entire population and mainly studies demographic characteristics.

A survey is usually carried out in order to understand the status of the phenomenon under observation. They may be subdivided as being descriptive, analytical, school surveys or genetic. Descriptive or normative Surveys may be of the survey testing method kind, or a questionnaire method survey or an interview based survey. Analytical surveys may include documentary surveys, observational surveys, rating surveys, critical incident surveys, and factor analysis surveys.

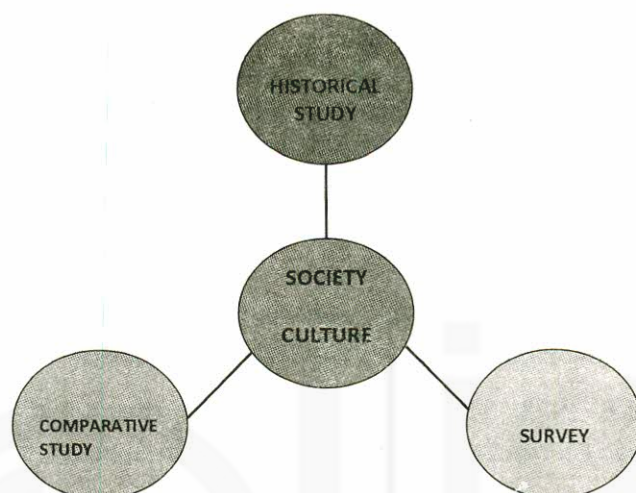
Survey research may be based on the nature of the variables as in status surveys and survey research. It may be based on the kind of group being measured as in sample surveys and population surveys. Finally, it may be based on the source of data collection as in questionnaire surveys, interview surveys and controlled observation surveys.

To improve the cross-sectional surveys, one may use longitudinal surveys, where the cross-sectional study is conducted repeatedly. When they are



conducted on the same individuals they are called panel surveys. Hypothetical situations are given to informants to note their reactions in factorial surveys. Other surveys are randomized response surveys. Many anthropologists have combined surveys with other kinds of methods in their research, like Raymond Firth among the Tikopia and William Foote-Whyte among the villagers of highland Peru.

Surveys may go beyond mere description of current situations and contexts to describing in detail strengths and weaknesses of different approaches to the issue and development programmes. They help us to study what exists, what is required and how to achieve certain goals.



**Fig. 3.2: Relationship between Society, Historical Study, Comparative Study and Survey**

The survey method has the advantage of gathering data from a relatively large number of cases at a particular time. The data thus collected is usually cross-sectional. It is usually not concerned with the particular instances of individuals. It involves a clearly defined problem with definite objectives. It requires an expert imaginative planning to undertake. The data needs to be carefully analysed and interpreted, and logical and skilful reporting of findings. Surveys vary greatly in complexity. Surveys are not undertaken to develop an organised body of scientific knowledge. It usually develops knowledge in order to determine present trends and solve local problems. It advances knowledge by giving a good overview of the issues involved, thus suggesting the course of future developments. It may help to fashion tools for doing research.

### 3.9 SUMMARY

Thus, it may be seen that methods pertain to what is performed within a science. It is thus a way of life within science. It consists of the major practices that constitute the doing of a science. It is also a pathway that gives some indication of what has to be done.

Techniques, on the other hand constitute the different practices within each scientific discipline or sub-discipline. They include the different ways of collecting scientific data and reorganising this data to create meaningful conclusions.

Methodology forms the overview of thoughts and philosophies that constitute scientific method. It is thus a meta-narrative that pools together the ideas and



logic behind scientific method. It looks for the social context of such thoughts and ideas, the background and historical conditions and also what these are likely to become in the future.

Taken together, they constitute the backbone of the sciences that joins together these practices as a whole. It is within this community of practices that we work as scientists.

Historical methods indicate the historical and social background of the studies being conducted within science. Comparative methods compare data between different populations, societies, cultures or other units as decided by the scientific problem. Surveys try to give an overview of local or large scale situations.

Taken together, all these practices become adjuncts to the important idea of fieldwork in anthropology. They are all important components, where fieldwork becomes a technique, sometimes taking the importance of a method, and according to a very few, a real methodology in itself.

### **References**

Cohn, Bernard S. (Ed.). 1991. *An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, India.

Driver, Harold E. 1973. "Cultural Diffusion" in R. Naroll and F. Naroll (eds.) *Main Currents in Cultural Anthropology*. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, pp. 157-183.

Feyerabend, Paul. 1975. *Against Method: Outline of an Anarchistic Theory of Knowledge*. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press.

Goode, William J., and Hatt, Paul K. 1952. *Methods in Social Research*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Kames, Lord (Henry Home). 1761. *Introduction to the Art of Thinking*. Edinburgh: W. Cruch.

Said, Edward. 1978. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books.

Srinivas, M. N. (ed.). 1958. *Method in Social Anthropology: Selected Essays of A.R Radcliffe-Brown*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Tylor, E.B. 1889. "On a Method of Investigating the Development of Institutions; Applied to Laws of Marriage and Descent" in *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol. 18, No. 3, pp. 245-72.

Young, Pauline V. and Calvin F. Schmid. 1988. *Scientific Social Surveys and Research: An Introduction to the Background, Content, Method, Principles, and Analysis of Social Studies*. New Delhi: Prentice Hall of India Private Ltd.

### **Suggested Reading**

Bernard, Russell H. 1995. *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Walnut Creek, etc.: Altamira Press.

Ellen, R.F. (ed.). 1984. *Ethnographic Research, a Guide to General Conduct*. London: Academic Press.

Epstein, A.L. (ed.). 1967. *The Craft of Social Anthropology*. London: Social Science Paperbacks in association with Tavistock Publications.



Gopala Sarana. 1975. *The Methodology of Anthropological Comparisons*. Arizona: University of Arizona Press.

Pelto, Pertti J. and Gretel H. Pelto. 1978. *Anthropological Research: The Structure of Inquiry*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Singh, K.S. 1985 *Tribal Society in India: An Anthropohistorical Perspective*. New Delhi: Manohar.

### **Sample Questions**

- 1) Distinguish between historical and comparative studies in anthropology.
- 2) Differentiate between method and technique.



## UNIT 4 GENEALOGY AND PEDIGREE

### Contents

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Meaning of Genealogy
- 4.3 Meaning of Pedigree
- 4.4 Genealogy and Pedigree
- 4.5 Early Works on Genealogy
- 4.6 Genealogy and Ethnography/Anthropology
- 4.7 Applications of Genealogical Method
- 4.8 How to Draw Pedigree and Genealogical Charts
- 4.9 Elementary Diagram of Primary Kin Connections
- 4.10 Pedigree Diagrams
- 4.11 Symbols Used in Genealogy to Represent Kinship Relations
  - 4.11.1 Representing Persons in Genealogies
  - 4.11.2 Representing Connection Types
  - 4.11.3 Representing a Nuclear Family
  - 4.11.4 Atom of Kinship
- 4.12 Conventions for Describing Kinship Relationships
- 4.13 Summary
- References
- Suggested Reading
- Sample Questions

### Learning Objectives

Once you have studied this unit, you should be able to:

- learn the meaning of genealogy and pedigree;
- distinguish between genealogy and pedigree;
- know the applications of genealogy and pedigree in anthropological studies;
- learn various symbols used in genealogy and pedigree; and
- learn how to draw genealogical and pedigree charts.

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The most fundamental institution of human society is the nuclear family. It is based on marriage and parentage. It consists of a wife, a husband and their unmarried children. Nuclear family is the formative domain for many other socio-cultural institutions. However nuclear family does not exist in isolation or independently. It is linked with other families, kin groups, community and society at large. Family also exists in other forms, for example, extended family. The relationships that exist between members of different types and forms of



family in different cultures reflect variation and complexity. These relationships also form the basis in understanding kinship systems. Further, family membership and family positions are used as criteria for membership and position in larger kin and social units. Kinship commonly plays a crucial role in the structure of non-industrial societies, determining both social relations and group relationship of the present generation as well as past generations. Marriage, for example, is usually significant in determining social/economic/religious and sometimes military alliances between villages, kin groups like clans and ethnic groups. In this unit, we will learn about how genealogy and pedigree are used as research techniques for understanding these networks of relationships. The genealogical method is a well-established procedure to collect kin relationships in ethnographic studies. It was used as a technique by the early ethnographers to identify all-important links of kinship determined by alliance and descent. Pedigree and genealogy have other wider applications in the study of human society and cultures.

---

## 4.2 MEANING OF GENEALOGY

---

We begin by defining and describing what genealogy is. Genealogy, derived from the Greek language (*genea*, “generation” and, *logos*, “knowledge”), is the study of families and the tracing of their lineages and history. Genealogy is an analytical tool to study kinship and social organisation. Genealogists and anthropologists use interviews, case study, oral traditions, historical records, and other records to obtain information about a family and to demonstrate kinship and pedigrees of its members. This practice is found in most parts of the world. Originally concerned with tracing royal, aristocratic, or clerical lines, genealogy has broadened its scope over the years, and many ordinary people now pursue it to keep the record of their ancestors and also as a hobby.

Keeping the track of family descent is an ancient practice and profession, for example, ancient Europe (written genealogies), China (printed genealogies), Redjang of south Sumatra, (genealogies written on bark cloth), north India (professional castes in compilation of genealogies), Samoa (memorised genealogies and presently recorded in notebooks) etc. Even *The Old Testament* contains lists of descent. There is a formalised oral recitation of descent lines in several preliterate societies. In these cultures, genealogical information was transmitted orally, usually as a list of names; later generations recorded and documented this information. Divine origins were often ascribed to kings and heroes. Modern genealogists use artifacts, including ancient records, coins, deeds, tapestries, paintings, and monuments to help them in their work. In anthropology, genealogy is used for generating information about various socio-cultural traits particularly related to kinship, descent, genetic analysis and to understand aspects like inheritance, succession etc

---

## 4.3 MEANING OF PEDIGREE

---

Now we will briefly define the meaning of pedigree. Pedigree is a line of ancestors or a list of ancestors; it is a way of representing family tree. The word pedigree is a corruption of the French “*pied de grue*” (pe, foot + de, of + grue, crane) or crane's foot, because the typical lines and split lines (each split leading to different offspring of the one parent line) resemble the thin leg and foot of a crane. Pedigree is a chart of an individual's ancestors. It is used in



human genetics to analyse Mendelian inheritance of certain traits, especially of familial diseases. In generic terms, a pedigree chart is an illustration which depicts the manifestation and appearance or phenotypes of a specific gene or genetic organism, along with its ancestors from every generation. It is seen in humans and may also be seen in race horses and show dogs. In physical anthropology, pedigree (otherwise also a cousin chart or table of consanguinity) is helpful in identifying the degree of cousin relationship between two individuals using their most recent common ancestor as the reference point. Pedigree can illustrate cousinship between two individuals either in degrees (first cousin, second cousin etc.) or in removals (once removed, twice removed etc.). This is done on the basis of how close in terms of generation the common ancestor is to each person. Pedigree is used by physical anthropologists to find out the exact relationship embedded in classificatory kin terms like cousins, uncles and aunts in the studies on consanguinity and other genetic studies.

---

#### **4.4 GENEALOGY AND PEDIGREE**

---

This part will tell us why the use of genealogy and pedigree is important. Genealogy and pedigree are used interchangeably for tracing out ancestry, to show kin relationships between persons and for statements of genealogical connections. Genealogy is also used as an abstract noun for the study of these statements. Genealogy can be referred to as a tool used by certain practitioners (like bards, aristocratic families, some occupational specialists etc.) who operate kinship systems. These oral or written records are comparable to the genealogies prepared by ethnographers. These traditional records are also used by ethnographers as evidences while generating genealogies in the field. However the oral/written records of traditional societies, aristocratic families, other families or individuals or practicing genealogists and the genealogies built up by ethnographers are not one and the same.

The genealogical statement made orally, diagrammatically or in written form or as narratives can be called as pedigrees. Anthropologist J. A. Barnes uses the word pedigree for a genealogical statement made orally, diagrammatically, or in writing by an actor or informant. Anthropologist Meyer Fortes defines pedigree as a 'charter by which any particular person presents himself as the descendant of a specified ancestor'. Yalman writing about the Kandyan Sinhalese draws a distinction between pedigree which link living people with their dead ancestors and genealogy which link living people to others around them. J. A. Barnes says that genealogy is a genealogical statement made by an ethnographer as part of his field record or of its analysis. It is found that, the genealogical data in an ethnographic investigation, entails a much larger range of attributes and networks than the people taken into consideration in the collection of pedigree enquiry. A pedigree is normally a contemporary statement, showing connections between people, many of whom died long ago. In a genealogy, the ethnographer, tries to show how these people during their life time, were thought to be related to one another as well as how these relationships are viewed now. In the construction of pedigree, the cultural factors play a role in showing the lines of descent. In genealogy, the demands of science play a role in recording the lines of descent and also other related information.

Thus genealogy can be designated as (1) the chart or diagram prepared by the ethnographer while tracing descent of a person or generated for a specialised



or particular purpose in order to understand the socio-cultural dimensions by following certain scientific procedures; and (2) genealogy can also be designated as an analytical tool to study the genealogical connections recorded in the form of statements.

For anthropologists, genealogy is distinguished from pedigree by the nature of their descriptions. While genealogy can be viewed as a popular, traditional interpretation of ancestrally defined relations, pedigree may be seen as a scientific interpretation of the same. The distinction rests upon the genealogical method as a scientific method of anthropological inquiry, from the popular art or tradition of certain practitioners or professionals who maintain the lines of descent of certain families and ethnic groups or communities. W.H.R. Rivers converted the way the English elite viewed the concept of pedigree into a scientific method. It grew into a distinct part of conducting fieldwork and the way ethnography was written. It was more than just accumulating genealogical links.

Ethnographers, usually but not invariably, begin drawing charts by identifying a central person, a key informant or the head of family or a leader, priest, a shaman, a known ancestor etc., and weave around his/her relatives, descendants, ascendants, collaterals either in a male line or female line or both. The results are often displayed in charts or written as narratives. Further this genealogical information is put to use for analysing various socio-cultural features in the populations studied by anthropologists. Pedigree is usually used to show or record the lines of descent of families though physical anthropologists apply for a specialised purpose of understanding consanguinity and its genetic implications.

#### 4.5 EARLY WORKS ON GENEALOGY

In this portion we will delve into how the genealogical method was used in the beginning. Genealogical method has been regarded as a popular and chief technique in the field of ethnography. Most probably, the existence of Western pedigrees must have generated interest among many travelers to collect genealogies among other peoples whom they visited. One of the first published genealogies of tribal people was collected by Sir George Grey in Western Australia. In his study of kinship terminology, the famous classical anthropologist L.H. Morgan showed much interest in the genealogical method. However the genealogical method, in anthropology, was devised and popularised by W.H.R. Rivers, during the Torres Straits Expedition of 1898-99. Rivers was interested in genetic as well as socially recognised kinship and paid much attention to kinship terminology. His method laid the foundation for later developments in social demography and the construction of statistical models. A comprehensive account on genealogy was given in *Notes and Queries on Anthropology* (1912), after which it became a standard procedure in social anthropology and physical anthropology. Its primary purpose, as Rivers opines, was to improve the analysis of social organisation, i.e. the concrete practice of interpersonal relations in kin groups and socio-cultural arrangements. The method uses extensive interviewing of named individuals (personal names) in order to: (1) collect kin relationship terms and vital statistics among non-literate populations, and (2) record their pedigrees, which reflected rights and responsibilities, social customs and practices relating primarily to rules concerning descent, post-marital residence, succession, and inheritance.



The method was used, along with censuses and settlement plans, in anthropological field research for classical monographs on the Todas (Rivers), Tallensi (Meyer Fortes), Tikopia (Raymond Firth), Ndembu (Victor Turner) and Sinhalese (Edmund Leach) among others. Robin Fox (1995) added a further dimension to the method by showing that, because a genealogy is a cultural form, care has to be taken that names are elicited in accordance with local practice. Robin Fox's Irish islanders began not with a named individual (an ego) but with ancestors. Alan Barnard and Anthony Good (1984) added further procedural refinements to ensure that no patrilineal bias affects the use of the genealogical method.

---

## **4.6 GENEALOGY AND ETHNOGRAPHY/ ANTHROPOLOGY**

---

Before learning about the applications of genealogy, we also briefly need to know the difference between genealogy and ethnography and anthropology. A simple difference lies between what genealogy is and how it is used in ethnography and anthropology. The main idea of genealogy is to reconstruct family trees and create logical family histories. However ethnography and historical anthropology in particular, uses genealogical method to build and describe the principles of kinship, marriage and descent which Kottak describes as "the social blocks of nonindustrial cultures" in the so-called kin-based societies (1991:26). It is also used to depict households as fundamental social units with the help of census data and comparative/typological analysis (Otterbein 1972). Detailed account of the "classical" genealogical method has been offered by Tyler (1969), also defined as ethno-genealogical method.

---

## **4.7 APPLICATIONS OF GENEALOGICAL METHOD**

---

We now proceed to learn about how genealogy is used in anthropology and specifically in kinship studies. Kinship plays an important part in the organisation of behaviour and the creation of social groups, as it is one of the most common existing features in human society. Kinship systems are dependent on the social identification and cultural application of affiliations based on descent and marriage. These usually include a set of kinship nomenclatures and a connected set of behavioural outlines and attitudes which form a methodical ensemble. On the basis of descent and consanguinity societies set apart different categories of relationships. Marriage and affinity also helps in distinguishing relationships. All may fall under the term kinship and it is genealogy and its study which helps in comprehending these relationships.

In actuality the significance of the genealogical method moves beyond the specific arena of descent studies yet it is hardly used by anthropologists who do not research on kinship or kin-based societies. It nevertheless presented the foundation of a type of structural demography in anthropology as promoted by Levi- Strauss. This seeks at a calculated description of the relationship between the order and permanence of social structure and the real size of a population. It is based on the collection of personal demographic and social information and the creating of pedigrees, household surveys etc.



The genealogical method is also used in the study of present urban anthropology. Here it is mostly used with ego-centred network analysis. It has also been widely used in migration studies of ethnic groups to America. However it has been most fundamental in the study of medical anthropology. For example, with the help of genealogical studies it was found that the disease kuru, found among the New Guinea highlanders was not hereditary as was first postulated, but due to the spread of cannibalism among them. Anthropologists have also used the genealogical method in AIDS research in Africa. Indeed, the nature and problems encountered in these two cases reflect W.H.R. Rivers' concerns when he first confronted Melanesian depopulation and inexplicable illnesses at the turn of the twentieth century, the setting in which he first began to develop the genealogical method. Genealogical method is also used in claiming land ownership rights by indigenous peoples. It is also used in establishing authenticity in the issuance of caste certificates. Because of these manifold applications, genealogy will remain a significant tool for empirical study and theoretical reflections in anthropology, indigenous rights, assertion of caste/tribe identity in availing some constitutional benefits.

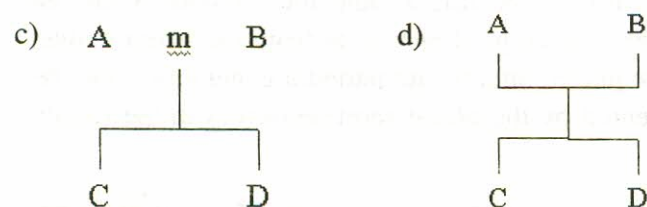
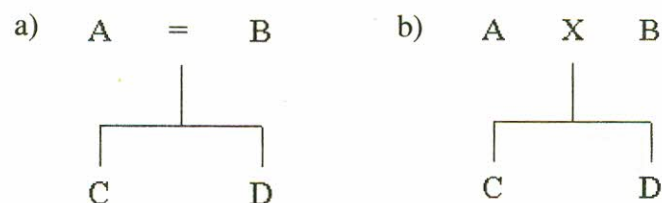
### Activity

Identify descriptive terms, classificatory terms, cross cousins and parallel cousins, clan exogamy, from a sample genealogy chart (caste, tribe, and religion based genealogies).

## 4.8 HOW TO DRAW PEDIGREE AND GENEALOGICAL CHARTS

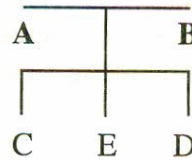
As pointed out earlier, pedigree and genealogy are represented by means of charts or diagrams. The following two paragraphs show how to draw a pedigree chart. The next section gives an account on how to draw genealogical charts. It is essential to understand various symbols and notations used in pedigree and genealogy.

## 4.9 ELEMENTARY DIAGRAM OF PRIMARY KIN CONNECTIONS





In the above charts “=”, “X” and “m” and an upward bracket [ ] represents marriage; the downward bracket [ ] and the vertical line indicates descent; the horizontal lines connecting C and D indicate sibling relationship. Another basic and most popularly used diagram is:

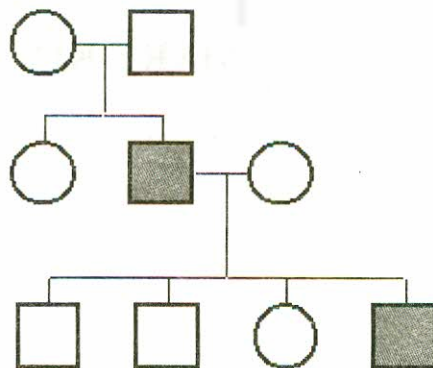


The horizontal line connecting A and B shows alliance relationship and the vertical lines connecting C, E and D indicate descent. However, in genealogical representations, alphabets are not used. The following account gives various symbols used in pedigree/genealogy charts.

The symbol used to depict females is a small circle ○ and males are depicted by a square □. A horizontal marriage line joins the symbols representing parents. The children are placed in a horizontal row below which is joined by a vertical line emerging from the parents' horizontal line. That is the horizontal line above the symbols for the children is itself connected to the parents' marriage line by a vertical line. The symbol for a single child is directly attached to this vertical line. Having understood how to draw primary relationships in a nuclear family we move on to draw a pedigree chart.

#### 4.10 PEDIGREE DIAGRAMS

A pedigree diagram shows family relationships where the people are represented by symbols and genetic relationships are represented by lines. Such diagrams make it simpler to envisage familial relationships especially large extended families. The mode of inheritance of biological traits, like dominant or recessive, for genetic ailments is determined by pedigrees. Below is an example of such a pedigree.



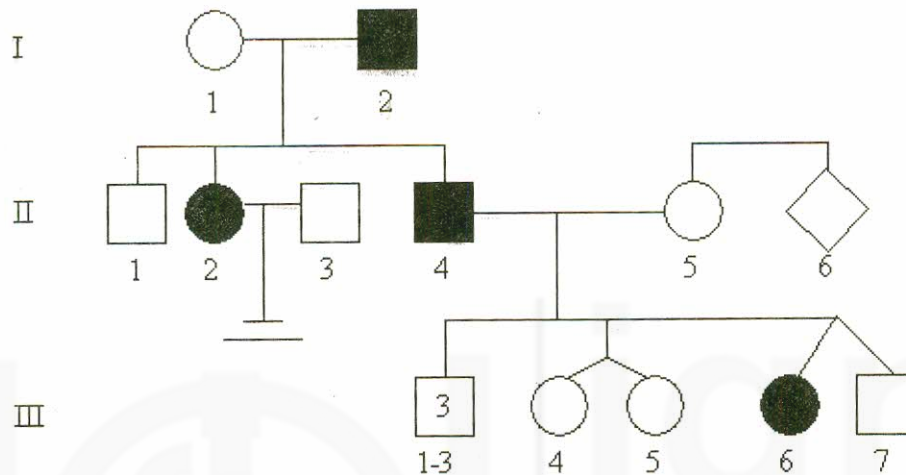
In a pedigree, males are represented by squares and females by circles. Mating is represented by a horizontal line connecting a male and a female. Children are represented by vertical lines which go downwards from the parents' line. The following generations are placed underneath parental generations and the top of the pedigree is represented by the oldest representatives in the family line.

If a pedigree analyses the pattern of inheritance of a specific trait, then the symbols of the persons who have the particular trait are shaded.



The pedigree above demonstrates that the grandparents have two children, a son and a daughter. The trait under study is possessed by the son. One of his four children, his son also has the trait.

In a pedigree, siblings or sibs are shown from left to right based on the sequence of birth. Every individual is labeled with a number by which reference can be made. The numbering system can follow a sequential arrangement from the oldest generation to the most recent or every generation may be represented by a Roman numeral and the individuals in a generation may be represented by Arabic numerals. Thus II- 2 would signify the second individual in the second generation of the pedigree.



When the recorder of a pedigree is unable to locate the sex of a person, then the symbol of diamond  $\diamond$  is used. When a number is inserted in an open symbol, this signifies the number of sibs of the same sex who are not separately recorded. If the disease or trait which the recorder is looking for is found in pedigree s/he is designing, then the affected symbol (person) is shaded black. If a circle or square remains unaffected, that is, the trait is absent then the symbol remains empty. The pedigree above shows that the marriage between II-2 and II-3 did not result in any children. II-5 and II-6 are siblings whose parents have not been added to this pedigree. The symbols III-4 and III-5 are identical twins. This is shown through the short vertical line coming downward from the sibship line. Symbols III-6 and III-7 are twins too but are not identical as they are not joined by a vertical line.

#### Activity

Draw pedigree charts showing first cousins, second cousin, one and half cousin and also cousin once removed, twice removed thrice removed etc.

### 4.11 SYMBOLS USED IN GENEALOGY TO REPRESENT KINSHIP RELATIONS

Anthropologists and other specialists of genealogies usually employ a simple set of symbols to represent persons and relationships in generating genealogical charts to represent kinship systems. These symbols were largely adopted from the International Federation of Eugenic Organisations in 1932 by the Sociological Research Committee of the Royal Anthropological Society of Great Britain (Man 1932, vol 32: 120-121) in a paper that was titled as The



*Standardisation of Pedigree Charts* (TSPC). However, symbols and rules are changed according to the suitability of any field situation and specific features of kinship system, and field researchers devise sets of particular symbols that are appropriate for the conditions in which the work is carried out. The symbols discussed below are accepted and recognised generically. In a genealogical chart, two different kinds of symbols are seen. The first set depicts persons and the second set depicts the relationships between these persons. These are known as connections.

The following account gives us an idea about the symbols used to represent persons: A male, whether boy or man, is usually represented by a **triangle**. A female, whether girl or woman, by a **circle**. A third symbol used is the **square**, where the gender is not specified. It could either represent a man or a woman. For example, the word cousin can be used for either a woman cousin or a man cousin. So in such cases a square helps to designate words/relationships which represent both males and females.

FEMALE



MALE



FEMALE (OR) MALE



In kinship studies and genealogical representations one has to remember the rule of economy: symbols used in graphic representations and verbal descriptions to describe a relationship should be shortest and the most efficient way, taking care not to distort native meanings underlying the relationships. Other suitable ways and symbols can be used to capture the essence and feature of kin terminology.

It is required to stress if a person is still living, or if he or she is deceased. In the case of being dead, the triangle, circle or square is coloured in black or crossed out.

#### 4.11.1 Representing Persons in Genealogies

These genealogical symbols depicting individuals do not tell us how these individuals can be connected to each other. We use more symbols to show these connections. Three types of connections can be shown: two individuals are connected through marriage, another two are connected by birth, i.e. they are siblings (brothers and sisters) and two persons are connected as one is the parent (father or mother) of the other. This connection is called filiation.

A marriage connection, also called alliance, is represented as a line that goes from below a person to below another person. Sometimes the symbol '=' is used. A sibling connection is represented as a line that goes from top of a person to the top of another person. The filiation connection (parent-children) is shown by a line which runs from below a parent to the top of the children. However when adoption is to be depicted in a genealogy then the connection line runs similarly but this is illustrated by using a broken line. In the diagrams below the three fundamental connection types (marriage, sibling, filiation) are portrayed.



Marriage connection



Sibling connection



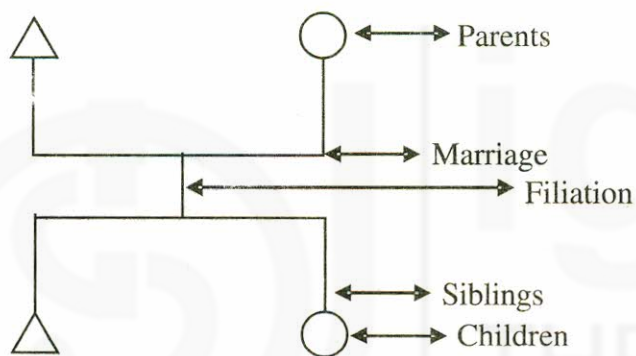
Filiation



### 4.11.2 Representing Connection Types

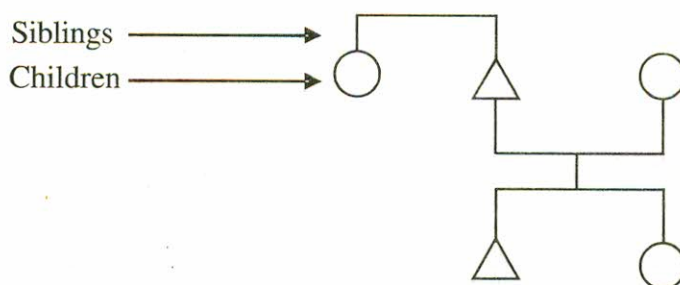
The above basic connections are combined in genealogies, and every person is linked to multiple persons through at least one of these connection types. This leads us to the second rule called the rule of multiple connectedness: to make genealogies informative, each person has to be connected to at least one other person; and the information becomes more informative with every distinct connection type that is added subsequently to each other person. We may say that genealogy allows more elements for explanation to point out if an individual is connected to several other individuals. In fact it represents how every individual is connected to other individuals through different connection types (marriage, sibling, filiation, date and place of birth, kind of residence, more than one marriage, marital status etc.)

The connection categories may spread to other individuals. Such lines do not have to connect directly to an individual, but may attach to show another connection type. For example, a nuclear family consisting of a father, a mother and their children is depicted in the diagram in the following manner:



### 4.11.3 Representing a Nuclear Family

The two filiation lines which go down from the parents are combined together with each child into one and thus show the sibling bond between the boy and the girl. This also signifies the marriage connection between their parents. Any line depicting connection can either lead to a person directly or to another connection which shows a different type.



Finally, we add father's younger sister to the nuclear family shown above. She can fit into what Levi-Strauss named as the atom of kinship. In other words she in this example signifies the smallest social unit from which kinship system kinds may be inferred.

### 4.11.4 Atom of Kinship

Along the graphical/diagrammatic representation of genealogies, anthropologists



also use conventional linguistic abbreviations to describe persons and relations. These abbreviations are to be remembered, even though they are straightforward.

The driving idea for these conventions is the fact that kinship terms cannot be translated from one system or culture to another. The English word “uncle”, for example, does not have any exact equivalent in the Aboriginal Australian Western Desert language, or in any south Indian tribe say Konda Reddy, because the word does not cover the same categories of persons. Indeed, an “uncle” is one’s mother’s as well as one’s father’s brother in English. In the Western Desert, however, these two persons are called with different words and constitute different types of relatives. In the Chenchu tribe (Andhra Pradesh), mother’s brother is called ‘mama’ and father’s brother is called ‘nayana’. Among the caste Hindus in Andhra Pradesh, father’s younger brother is called ‘babai’ or ‘chinnayana’ Anthropologists therefore use abbreviations that are descriptive, that is, they are not a translation of a specific kin term (“uncle” or babai or chinnayana), but are based on primary or “biological” relations (such as mother, brother, father’s brother, mother’s brother etc.), Below is a table that summarizes these conventions and the corresponding relationship.

| <b>Abbreviation</b>             | <b>Specific</b> | <b>General</b>                                                                   |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| F                               | Father          | any person’s Father                                                              |
| M                               | Mother          | any person’s Mother                                                              |
| B                               | Brother         | any person’s Brother                                                             |
| Z                               | Sister          | any person’s Sister (Z is used for sister in order to avoid confusions with Son) |
| S                               | Son             | any person’s Son                                                                 |
| D                               | Daughter        | any person’s Daughter                                                            |
| H                               | Husband         | any person’s Husband                                                             |
| W                               | Wife            | any person’s Wife                                                                |
| Sp                              | Spouse          | Husband and/or Wife                                                              |
| <b>Additional abbreviations</b> |                 |                                                                                  |
| e                               | elder           | eB, for example, is the elder Brother                                            |
| y                               | younger         | yB, for example, is the younger Brother                                          |

#### **Genealogical Abbreviations**

|                        |                          |                     |
|------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|
| B = Brother            | C = Child(ren)           | D = Daughter        |
| F = Father             | GC = Grandchild(ren)     | GP = Grandparent(s) |
| P = Parent             | S = Son                  | Z = Sister          |
| W = Wife               | H = Husband              | SP = Spouse         |
| <b>LA = In-law</b>     | <b>SI = Sibling</b>      | <b>M = Mother</b>   |
| (m.s.) = male speaking | (f.s.) = female speaking |                     |



## 4.12 CONVENTIONS FOR DESCRIBING KINSHIP RELATIONSHIPS

The abbreviations or conventions are collective. They are the same as the graphical depiction of genealogies. For example, in English the relation uncle can either be a mother's brother (MB) or a father's brother (FB). The nomenclature for both the relation is the same. However in many other places, like the Western Desert, a mother's brother and a father's brother have different names and these names represent different meaning and relationship. Sometimes these combinations become rather complex. For example a second cousin can be a mother's mother's brother's daughter's son (MMBDS) but a mother's mother is also of course one of the grandmothers.

Concepts like classificatory and descriptive kinship comes up in the discussion of how important are a relation in one culture and the kinship system studied. So for example, an uncle might have much significance in some society whereas in another he might have no important role to play. Discussion of such terms and naming them are all related to the studying of genealogies.

For example, in the Western Desert, people who are not related by blood, i.e. is not directly genealogically connected (as in European society) are still considered as a part of a family. They are seen as kin members but they have to have something in common with the family to be considered a kin. Living in the same community for a long length of time is good enough reason to be considered a part of a family. So though husband, wife, children, i.e. the nuclear family and their extended family are still important, (like in the European society) the kinship system extends beyond members connected by birth and marriage. Thus the aboriginal Australian kinship systems fall under the classificatory kinship system and are universal.

## 4.13 SUMMARY

Social groups, usually, comprise persons known to each other through membership criteria such as caste, tribe, kinship, occupation, neighbourhood, religion etc. Closely knitted social groups are formed mainly through kinship particularly among the traditional communities, though modern communities are no exceptions to this dictum. In fact, almost all social groups which are very closely knitted are formed through a network of kin relations. These relations ramify and connect other social groups through the principles (or rules) of common descent, consanguinity, affinity and alliance, filiation (or offshoot formation), residence etc., apart from other social, economic criterion. Many a times, the kin relationships assume some specialty which needs a careful understanding. Genealogy and pedigree are used, primarily, as research techniques in order to decipher the underlying meanings of kin relations and to show diagrammatically the web of kin connections between families and wider kin groups such as clans, moieties and fratries etc. Genealogy and pedigree are, then, the tools with which one can understand the social as well as biological relations existing between person to person(s), group to group(s) and person(s) to group(s). Pedigree and genealogy have also other wider applications in the study of human society and cultures.

Genealogy and pedigree have been regarded as one and the same. Both deal primarily with tracing kin connections existing between members of kin groups.



However, in anthropology, genealogy and pedigree are used for different analytical purposes to arrive at different inferences and hence these two can be distinguished for analytical purposes.

In physical anthropology pedigree is used for a specialised purpose of understanding consanguinity and its genetic implications by tracing exact biological connections between persons and to analyse Mendelian inheritance of certain traits, especially of familial diseases. In order to understand a particular "stated" relationship through a kin term (which may not be biologically meaningful), it is essential to have cultural explanations of the "stated" relationship(s).

The genealogical method, in anthropology, was devised and popularised by W.H.R.Rivers during the Torres Straits Expedition of 1898-99. Genealogy is generally used in kinship studies, structural anthropo-demography, in modern urban anthropology, studies on migration of ethnic groups, in medical anthropology, in AIDS research. Genealogical method is also used in claiming land ownership rights by indigenous peoples. It is also used in establishing authenticity in the issuance of caste certificates.

Pedigree and genealogy are represented by means of charts or diagrams. Different symbols and notations are used to represent different kin members and different kin connections. Symbols are shaded where a particular biological trait is inherited by the members in succeeding generations.

Before going to the field for data collection, it is advisable to practice drawing genealogical and pedigree charts. It should be remembered that genealogy and pedigree are indispensable for anthropological fieldwork. The fieldworker has to collect extensive genealogies and as many pedigrees as possible in support of the data they are analysing and interpreting.

### **References**

- Barnard, Alan, and Anthony Good. 1984. *Research Practices in the Study of Kinship*. London: Academic Press.
- Firth, R W. 1957. *We the Tikopia: a Sociological Study of Kinship in Primitive Polynesia*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Fortes, Meyer. 1945. *The Dynamics of Clanship among the Tellesi*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Fortes, Meyer. 1969. *Kinship and the Social Order: The Legacy of Lewis Henry Morgan*. Chicago: Aldine.
- Fox, Robin. 1995. *Tory Islanders: A People of the Celtic Fringe*. Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Kottak, C. P. 1994. *Cultural Anthropology*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Leach, E R. 1961. *Pul Eliya: A Village in Ceylon (a Study of Land Tenure and Kinship)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Morgan, Lewis H. 1871 "Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity of the Human Family". In *Smithsonian Contributions to Knowledge*, Vol. 17, art. 2, Publication No. 218. Washington: Smithsonian Institution.
- Otterbein, K. F. (1972). *Comparative Cultural Analysis: An introduction to Anthropology*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.



Rivers, W.H.R. 1906. *The Toda*. London: Maxmillan &Co.

Sociological Research Committee of the Royal Anthropological Society of Great Britain. 1932. "The Standardisation of Pedigree Charts (TSPC)". *Man* 1932, vol 32: 120-121).

Turner, Victor. 1967. *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*. New York: Cornel University Press.

Tyler, Stephen A (ed). 1969. *Cognitive Anthropology*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.

Yalman, Nur. 1962. "The Structure of Sinhalese Kindred: A reexamination of Dravidian Terminology" In *American Anthropologist*. Vol: 64: 548-75.

### Suggested Reading

Barnes, J. A. 1967. "On Genealogies". In. A.L Epstein (Ed) *The Craft Of Social Anthropology*. London: Tavistock Publications.

Hackenberg, R. 1973. "Genealogical Method in Social Anthropology: The Foundations of Structural Demography", in J.Honigmann (ed.) *Handbook of Social and Cultural Anthropology*. Chicago: Rand McNally.

Rivers, W. H. R. 1900. "Genealogical Method of Collecting Social and Vital Statistics" in *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 30: 74-82.

Rivers, W. H. R. 1910. "The Genealogical Method of Anthropological Inquiry" in *Sociological Review* 3: 1-12.

Scuhsky, Ernest, L. 1965. *Manual for Kinship Analysis*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winst.

### Sample Questions

- 1) Define and distinguish genealogy and pedigree.
- 2) Discuss the importance and application of genealogical method in understanding social organisation of human communities.
- 3) Present various symbols and notations used in drawing genealogical and pedigree charts.
- 4) Trace out the genealogical connections of a person known to you and explain various facets of his/her genealogical connections
- 5) Trace out the inheritance of a particular biological trait (normal or abnormal) by means of a pedigree chart.

**Note:** The last two questions must show the characteristic features of marriage rules. Hence suitable examples are to be used.

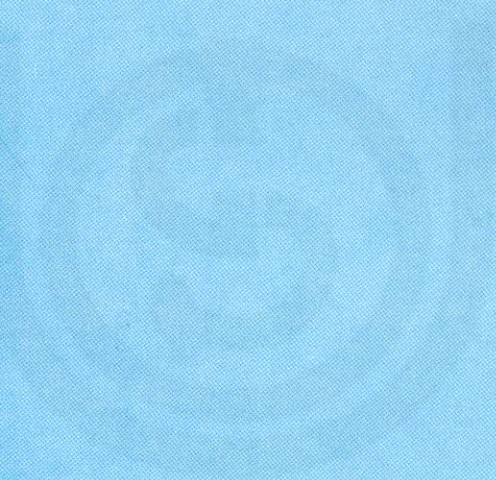


## NOTES





SOSS-IGNOU/P.O. 3T/August, 2011



ignou  
THE PEOPLE'S  
UNIVERSITY

ISBN : 978-81-266-5554-0