

B.A.PART-I(SOCIOLOGY)	
Paper-II(Social Anthropology)	
Topic- Nature of Social Anthropology College- MMC,P.U(Department of Sociology)	By: Dr. Archna kumari Email ID: archnakumari706@gmail.com

❖ **Introduction:**

The most common and basic definition of Anthropology is to say that Anthropology is the study of man across time and space. Anthropology deals with every aspect of human being. It not only studies human beings in present context but also studies human beings journey through the path of evolution from Pleistocene period till today's globalised world and also tries to trace the future path. Anthropology studies man irrespective of any geographical boundary. It studies human being as a whole and also tries to study differences within it. Man is the most wonderful creature in the world with cultural, social, and habitational variation in it. Unlike any other species Homo sapiens represents a diverse population in itself in respect of culture. Culture variation gives a diverse look to the same species Homo sapiens. Biologically defined Homo sapiens are an interbreeding population; but culturally man creates different rules for marriage. Same species does not contain interbreeding population. Cultural prohibition defines mating pattern. Likewise, biologically all the members of the same species i.e. Homo sapiens have equal potentialities in its individuals. But human being differentiates themselves on the basis of race. We can mention many such examples that convince us to define anthropology as a unique science to study man comprising all the differences and similarities within it. Anthropologists find out the differences and at the same time it tries to find out the general characteristics within the same species Homo Sapiens. Anthropology professes systematically to research all the manifestations of human being and human activity in a unified way.

Generally speaking social anthropology deals with the study of this aspect of man. But, as a discipline, social anthropology has different meaning in different countries. Reflecting diversity and variation in human thought we find different thought surrounding social anthropology.

❖ **Nature of social anthropology:**

Social anthropology is a science and to know this fact, it is necessary to understand what is science. Some begin to consider a particular subject matter to be science as chemistry or engineering etc. common people distinguish between

science and art in this very sense. But it is better to let the scientists explain what science is. Some definitions of science are given below:

1. Beisanz, J and Besanz, M. it is approach rather than content that is the test of science.
 2. Green, science is a way of investigation.
 3. White. Science is scienteing.
 4. Weinberg and shabat. Science is a certain way of looking at the world.
 5. Karl Pearson. The unity of science consists alone in its method, not in its nature.
- Besides these scientists, Karl, Churchman, Acoff, Gillin and Gillin and many social anthropologists also have regarded science as method. It is because of method that it differs from art. It is due to method that all science even when they have separate scopes are called sciences.

❖ **Steps in Scientific Method:**

Scientific method is a systematic study of a subject matter within a limited scope. This method requires great patience, courage, hard labour, constructive imagination and objectivity. No man can utilize scientific system without a scientific notion, before starting work on a scientific system; a research scholar should minutely define the problem which is the subject of his research. The clearer is the definition the easier shall be the work of research.

Main steps of scientific method are given below:

1. Observation: The first step in scientific system is to observe the subject matter of research minutely and carefully. This observation often needs the help of the instruments. These instruments must be exact.
2. Recording: The second step needed in scientific system is to record this observation carefully. An impartial objectivity is very essential in doing it.
3. Classification: Then the classification and organization of the collected material will have to be done. It is a very serious step. In the words of Karl Pearson, “The classification of facts, the recognition of their sequence and relative significance is the function of science”. The classification is done inn such a way that a relation and semblance in the scattered elements may be seen. Thus the subject matter is arranged on logical grounds.
4. Generalisation: the fourth step in a scientific system is to find a common rule or to generalize on the basis of semblance in the classified matter. This common rule is called a scientific principle. In the words of MacIver “such a law is simply another name for a carefully described and uniformly recurring sequence of conditions”.
5. Verification: A scientific system does not stop after making generalizations. The verification of these generalizations is also necessary. Scientific principles can be

verified and such a verification is their necessary condition without which they cannot be called scientific.

❖ **Essentials of Science**

What are the requirements of any study to be called scientific is now clear for the above explanation of the scientific method. The necessary elements or the special features of science are given below:

1. **Scientific Method:** As has been said before, any subject is called a science not because of its subject matter but because of a scientific method.
2. **Factual:** Science is a study of facts. It discovers real truths. Its subject matter is not ideal but factual.
3. **Universal:** Scientific principles are universal. They are found to be true in all countries and at all times.
4. **Veridical:** A scientific rule is veridical. Its veracity can be examined at any time. As many times it is examined, so many times it will prove to be true.
5. **Discovery of cause-effect relationship:** Science discovers the relations of cause and effect in its subject matter and presents a universal and verified rule in the same connection.
6. **Prediction:** Science can predict on the subject of cause-effect relationship on the basis of universal and verified rules. It is on this belief in cause-effect that the foundation of science stands. Scientist knows that 'what will be' can be decided on the basis of 'what is' because the law of cause-effect is universal and unchanging.

❖ **Social Anthropology as a science:**

An examination of social anthropology, on the basis of the aforesaid six rudiments, reveals that social anthropology possesses all the essential elements of a science.

1. **Social anthropology makes use of scientific method:** All methods of social anthropology are scientific. They make use of scientific techniques like schedule, participant observation, historical procedure and case history, etc. First of all, they gather facts through observation. Then they are recorded in an orderly form. Afterwards this matter is classified and in the end, common principles are made on the basis of accepted facts. The validity of these principles are examined.
2. **Social anthropology is factual:** Social anthropology is a comparative study of the facts about social events, relations and reactions. Participant observation is its main method. In this method an anthropologist goes to live among those people whom he has to study. Thus his study is in accordance with facts.

3. **The principles of social anthropology are universal:** the rules of social anthropology are proved in all countries so long as the circumstances are the same; there is no chance of an exception in them.
4. **The principles of social anthropology are veridical:** thus the principles of social anthropology always prove true on verification and even on re-verification. Their validity can be verified by anybody and at any time.
5. **Social anthropology defines cause effect relations:** social anthropology discovers cause-effect relations in social facts, events and relations, etc. for example, an anthropologist, after his comparative study of various cultures tells us about life style to be found in a particular culture and the extent to which the life styles undergo a change with culture changes. Thus, social anthropology answers 'what' along with 'how'.
6. **Social anthropology can predict :** On the basis of cause-effect relationship, social anthropologist can guess the future and can predict about social reactions and events, etc. he can decide 'what will be' on the basis of 'what is' after knowing the cause-effect relations. For example, by observing cultural change, he can predict about a change of life pattern.

❖ **Conclusion:**

It is clear from the aforesaid discussion of the nature of social anthropology that social anthropology is a science. It contains an abstract form of thoughts. Scientific study is possible only through abstract forms. The rules of these abstract forms decide the reactions of concrete things. In this way the rules of social anthropology are universal and veridical in practical shape.