Social Anthropology: Nature and Scope

baffled when they came across various types of people having entirely different cultures. They tried to communicate their strange experience through writing, by describing the people and their facts. At the end of nineteenth century, the administrators and missionaries in India wrote a lot about the Indian people and their life. Trained British officials namely Risley, Dalton, Thurston, O'Malley, Russell, Crook, Mills etc. and many others who were posted in India, wrote compendia on tribes and castes of India. During this time some British anthropologists like Rivers, Seligman, Radcliffe–Brown, Hutton came to India and conducted Anthropological fieldwork. Throughout the whole century after this, Anthropologists in India proceeded successfully. Indian anthropologists borrowed the ideas, frameworks and procedures of work from western anthropologists and practiced these studying their own culture and society instead of other cultures.

Different scholars like S.C. Roy, D.N. Majumdar, G.S. Ghurye, S.C. Dube, N.K. Bose, L.P. Vidyarthi and S. Sinha had tried to find out the genesis and development of Social Anthropology in India. S.C. Roy's paper *Anthropological Researches in India* (1921) reflects upon the works on tribes and castes published before 1921. The anthropological accounts consisted of the writings of British administrators and missionaries as before 1921 anthropological work in India was mainly done by these people. After this, D.N. Majumdar tried to trace the development of Anthropology in India. This attempt was made after twenty five years of S.C. Roy's work. D.N. Majumdar tried to relate the developing discipline of Anthropology in India with the theory of culture that originated in Britain and America. American influence was first recognised besides the works of British administrators and missionaries.

G.S. Ghurye, in his article The teaching of Sociology, Social Psychology and Social Anthropology (1956), wrote, 'Social Anthropology in India has not kept pace with the developments in England, in Europe or in America. Although Social Anthropologists in India are, to some extent, familiar with the work of important British Anthropologists or some continental scholars, their knowledge of American Social Anthropology is not inadequate'. S.C. Dube in (1952) discussed the issue in the light of research oriented issues. He stated that Indian Anthropology needed more attention from the social workers, administrators or political leaders, so that the research oriented issues can be dealt with properly. N.K. Bose in 1963 discussed the progress of Anthropology in India under headings - Prehistoric Anthropology, Physical Anthropology and Cultural Anthropology. Recent trends like village studies, caste studies, study of leaderships and power structure, kinship and social organisation of tribal village and Applied Anthropology came to the Indian scenario in 1970s and L.P. Vidyarthi discussed these issues, tracing the growth of Anthropology in India. He felt the need of an integrated effect from various disciplines for a proper understanding of man and society. His main stress was laid on 'Indianess', According to him ideas of Indian thinkers as reflected in ancient scriptures were full of social facts and so those could be explored in the understanding of cultural process and civilisation history of India. Surajit Sinha (1968) supporting the view of L. P. Vidyarthi stated that the Indian Anthropologists readily responded to the latest developments of the west but they had laid logical priority to the Indian situation.

In India, Anthropology started with the work of missionaries, traders and administrators where the prime focus was the different cultural backgrounds of Indian people. The rich tribal culture attracted the study of social anthropology. Tribal culture became a dominant field for Social anthropological research. This continued along with the changing trend and accommodated the study of village system, and Indian civilisation. Other social institutions like – religion, kinship, marriage etc. also came to the field