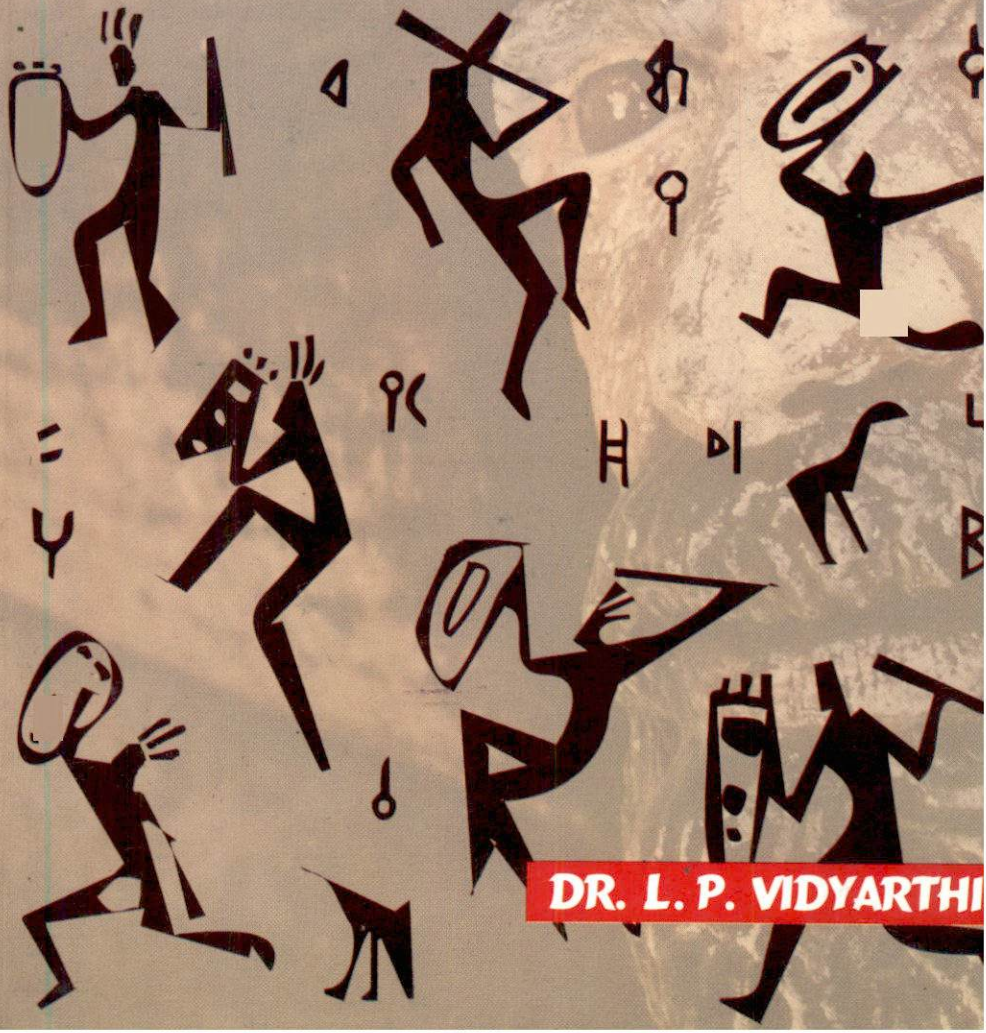
KITAB MAHAL

# APPLIED ANTHROPOLOGY IN INDIA



DR. L. P. VIDYARTHI

# APPLIED ANTHROPOLOGY IN INDIA

## (Principles, Problems and Case Studies)

*Edited by*

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# PREFACE

The future of human civilization depends to a high degree upon men's capacity to understand the forces and factors which control his own behaviour. Such an understanding depends on the development of the use of science of society. One of the important contributions of science lies in human understanding and welfare.

Thus, along with the development of basic social sciences a challenge, has also been posed to social, scientists, particularly to anthropologists, to act as social doctor to help the administration at various levels in diagnosing social ills, in prescribing the appropriate remedies and, then in smoothening out the cause of change from traditional to transitional and from transitional to "re-organisational" phases of our society, a change, the tempo of which has been remarkably accelerated under the impact of modern forces. Hence, an anthropologists engaged in development programme carries a heavier responsibility, when he seeks to alter a people's way of life, he is dealing not with one individual, but with the well-being and happiness of a section of men and women. In our efforts to better the lives of others, the planners and administrators overlook the cultural background of the community and make desperate efforts to alter the way of life by introducing modern technology and methods in tradition-bound Indian societies. Such desperate efforts to interfere with life styles of the peoples, some time, by a team or sponsors of cross-cultural missions, is bound to meet with "resistance."

Our researches among the various dimensions of Indian society go to establish that people resist changes that go to interfere with their respective core cultures. And it is this core agricultural traits which we usually forget. In India, cultural traits could be numerous, for example, the religion. The people of India belong to either Hinduism or Islam or Christianity or Buddhism or Jainism or Zoroastrainism. Apart from these great religions, there are groups belonging to tribal religion. The Hindus and Muslims

are further divided into several castes and sects. Mention must be made of the scheduled castes and other backward classes. The development of these communities are one of the special responsibilities of the applied anthropologists.

This book is the revised and enlarged edition of the earlier book under the same title. It includes the revised versions of most of the articles published earlier with the exception of a few which have been dropped. Several new articles are also included to cover a wide range of subject as well as to suit the present day problem. The papers have been arranged under four parts covering (i) Principles and Concepts, (ii) Approaches and Problems, (iii) Agencies and Case Studies and (iv) Applied Physical Anthropology.

I thankfully acknowledge the inspirations and help rendered by various persons particularly Dr. A.K. Haldar Reader in my Department in revising and editing this volume.

**L.P. VIDYARTHI**

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# SECTION I

# INTRODUCTION

# 1

# HISTORY OF APPLIED ANTHROPOLOGY IN INDIA

**L.P. Vidyarthi**

Anthropology in India originated under the influence of and to serve the purpose of the colonial administration of the British. The alien administrators could realise that for an effective and successful administration of the natives needed knowledge about their life and culture. The foreign missionaries, too, felt the necessity of knowing about their so-called "Pagan" religion, peculiar customs and practices and their language for the purpose of conversion. For the foreign travellers, adventurers and the army personnel as well the primitive and folk cultural life of the people in India provided a source of attraction ; and as a result of that they approached inaccessible areas of the tribals and presented descriptive accounts about the land and the people of the area.

The term 'Applied Anthropology' is not of recent origin. It was used by D.G. Brinton[1] in his speech as early as 1875 but it came into use before the late 1920s and middle 1930s. It indicated and in a sense created a new interest to social (or cultural) anthropologists in research meant to give practical aid and guidance to Government and other bodies either controlling or influencing the public life[2] (Encyclopaedia Britanica-1961). All those studies which are given the name of applied science are concerned with the techniques based on scientific principles. According to Elliot D. Chapple[3] 'Applied Anthropology' is regarded on the aspects of Anthropology which deals with the description of changes in human relations and in the isolation that control them and includes an examination of those factors which restrict the possibility of change in human organization (Chapple Elliot D., 1953). Brinton says that the aim of Applied Anthropology is accurately to ascertain what are the criteria of civilization and what individual or social elements have in the past contributed work to it, how these can be continued and strengthened and what new forces, if any, may be called in to hasten the progress' (1878). So Boas[4], in 1907, considering the practical uses of Anthropology finds there is such areas as teaching the relativity of values in showing men that are responsible as they think, and is demonstrating that is evolving away from nationalism.

The systematic use of such a study for effective administration in India was first realised as early as in 1807 when the Court of Directors of the East India Company made a

formal decision that "such knowledge would be of great use in the future administration of the country" (Roy 1921). To this effect Francis Buchanan was appointed by the Governor-General in Council to undertake an ethnographic survey to enquire into the conditions of the inhabitants of Bengal and their religion (Buchanan, 1820). Since then anthropologically oriented officers like Risley (1891), Dalton (1879), Grigson (1938), Gurdon (1914), Thurston (1909), and many others, were assigned in addition to their administrative duties, the task of preparing handbooks, gazetteers, monographs etc. on the tribes and castes of India. Owing to their efforts, the first set of ethnographic data for the purpose of colonial administration was brought to light.

Along with the administrators a few British anthropologists such as Rivers (1906), Redcliffe Brown (1922), Hutton (1931), etc., examined critically the tribal situations in certain parts of India and made several recommendations for the smooth and effective colonial administration. It was in 1931 that Hutton came out with his views regarding evil effects of contact on the tribes. "The solution of the problems", according to him, "would be to create self-governing tribal areas with free powers of self-determination in regard to surrounding or adjacent units" (Hutton 1931 : 504-07).

Among the Indian nationals S.C. Roy, who studied several tribes of Bihar, brought to light for the first time the devastating effects of contact on some of the jungle tribes of Bihar. While his opinions are well known about the major tribes in one of his papers, he highlights the evil effects of contacts on the minor tribes in the following words :

> "With the opening up of the country by roads and railways under the British rule and the gradual deforestation of the country and even the increasing restrictions in the use of forests, these forest tribes (the Birhor and the Korwa) are slowly but surely dying out partly from famine and partly from loss of interest in life" (Roy 1931 : 375-77).

The evil effect of culture contracts among the tribals which have had direct bearing on applied anthropological research was taken up by D.N. Majumdar and A. Aiyappan under the influence of the British functional approach. Majumdar (1937) reported that the Ho of Kolhan had undergone much degeneration since they were studied by the earlier investigator, Col. Dalton, in 1879. He found the people "a degenerate race of men with weak constitution and a lower expectation of life." In another paper Majumdar (1939) reporting about the Korwa observes that the disparity in the proportion of sexes, imported diseases, loss of

ambition in life were leading to de-population in their ranks. The direct cause of apathy and decline he detected, in the changed economic and social conditions and enumerated eleven of the "tolls of the discomfort".

Aiyappan deserves credit for being the direct student of Malinowski in the University of London. In the light of the principles of functionalism, Aiyappan, after his return from London, conducted field enquiry among the Iravas. He focused his attention on the changing culture of the Iravas and published the result in the shape of a monograph on the Iravas and Culture Change as early as in 1943 (Aiyappan, 1944). In addition to this work, under the auspices of Madras Museum, which has been an old centre of anthropological research in South India, Aiyappan made several other field enquiries and encouraged young talents to undertake researches in the light of functional approach.

**Concept of Parkland and Elwin**

In the sphere of planning for the tribals, however, an explicit and bold but most misunderstood view found expression in Verrier Elwin's monograph on the Baiga of Central Provinces. In this book, he not only diagnosed the malady and the devastaing effects of 'overhasty and unregulated process of uplift and civilisation' but also suggested the remedy. 'The first necessity', according to him, was the establishment of a sort of National Park in which not only the Baiga, but the thousands of simple Gonds in their neighbourhood might take refuge'. The administration was to be so adjusted as to allow 'the tribesmen to live their life with utmost possible happiness and freedom' The missionaries of any sort were not be allowed to break the tribal life'. In this manner everything possible was to be done for a tribe's progress and advantage provided that the quality of the tribal life was not impaired, that the tribal culture was not destroyed and that the tribal freedom was restored and maintained. Their contact with the outside world was to be reduced to the minimum (Elwin 1939 ; 511-19).

About the end of 1941, Elwin published another book entitled "Loss of the Nerve" in which he expanded the views he had previously expressed in his book. "The Baiga", both as regards the arguments as well as their validity as applied to other tribes of Central India. In this book, his tone in support of "isolationism" appeared to be stronger and in order to illustrate this observation, the following lines from Elwin's book may be quoted :

"But for the aboriginal in the Central Provinces, except in

> certain cases, liquor is not a source of degradation or disease, the real evil of liquor to the aboriginal is that it brings him into contact with and often makes him dependent on a degraded type of alien." (Elwin 1941).

Elwin published a number of other books and papers and also wrote a series of popular and illustrated articles of defence of tribal institutions and habits. In recognition of his appreciation for the tribal culture he married two tribal women, one after the other. His idea of a 'national park' and complete isolation was taken to be the anthropological approach to the tribal problem. The anthropologists owing to all these writings were labelled as 'isolationists', revivalists' and 'no changer' by the social workers and the members of the Indian National Congress Party.

**Constructive Period**

In the initial state of formulatory period, the administrators and scholars were more concerned with "fact-collection" and not with problem oriented analysis. Except for Elwin's publication of problem-oriented monographs, more or less systematic and analytical publication about tribal problems was attempted for the first time in the tribal number of the Eastern Anthropologists in 1949, to which a number of anthropologists (Furer Haimendorf, Chattopadhyaya, Naik, Dube, Srivastava, Majumdar and Ehrenfels) and a few social workers (Thakkar Bappa and Wandreker)[5] contributed papers on the various aspects of changing tribes of different parts of India. This volume, for the first time, described the various approaches to tribal problems and brought out sharply the views of anthropologists and social workers on the general and specific aspect of these problems. Then, in a series of publications Elwin from time to time, also expressed his views about the tribal problems. Initially, he was criticised by social workers and others as "isolationist", but later, with certain modifications, his approach was, however, accepted by the former Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru.[6] Under the able guidance of Elwin, a series of monographs on NEFA tribes were completed and published. Elwin's work 'A Philosophy for NFEA' may be taken to recommend a democratically oriented approach to tribal problems where "the value" of the tribal culture has been given due recognition. At many points one is reminded of Tax's concept of Action Anthropology.

The position held by Elwin, however, was immediately refuted by Ghurye who traced the natural process of assimilation of the tribes. Quoting at length from the ethnographic materials on different tribes. Ghurye at one place observes as follows which

reflects his stand for encouraging the process of assimilation :

> "Some of the tribes are so far Hinduised that they have got assimilated as different castes in the caste system. This gradual process of assimilation, however, has been distributed during the British regime owing to the policy of the government, as well as activities of the missionaries" ; and he refuses to accept that "Hinduisation of the tribal is accompanied by the evil desire of the kinds postulated by O'Malley and by Elwin" (Ghurye, G.S. 1843, 1959).

From time to time, papers dealing with tribal problems appeared in anthropological journals like. The Eastern Anthropologist, Man in India, Journal of Social Research and Human Organisation. Among the journals, two issues of Journal of Social Research (Volumes II and III, No. 2) deserve special mention, as they are the special numbers of applied and action anthropology, which later on have been edited in the shape of a book on a comprehensive scale by this author (Vidyarthi 1960, 1962, 1968).

In this book a series of thirty-eight papers, divided into four parts, cover a wide field of applied and action anthropology. In the first part, in a series of eight papers the general concepts, principles, problems and postulates of applied and action anthropology have been discussed by competent authorities on the subjects. The second part of the book discusses the various problems of tribal welfare while in the third part concrete case studies drawn from specific tribes of different parts of India have been described. In the fourth part, a few problems of applied physical anthropology have been described by competent scholars. Thus, taken as a whole, the book is complete in itself and provides a valuable handbook to those scholars, administrators, planners, social workers and the advanced students of social welfare who have been interested in the affairs of tribal welfare in particular and applied anthropology in general.

Though, most of the papers are of substantive nature and deal with tribal and rural problems of the different parts of India, a few papers deal with the methods and general principles of applied and action anthropology (Tax 1959, Majumdar 1959, Jay 1959, Silverberg 1959, Bose 1960, Das 1960, Dube 1960, Roy Burman 1960 and Vidyarthi 1960).[7]

Books by Sachchidananda (1964), Vidyarthi (1963), Naik (1957), Biswas (1956), Nath (1960), Das and Raha (1963), Fuchs (1960), Majumdar (1962) and a few others contain some materials bearing upon the tribal problems of the respective communities. Recently, a few papers dealing with the forests, crafts and general

development programmes in tribal areas have been written by Roy Burman (1964 A, 1964 B) under the auspices of the Census Operation of India, and these reflect anthropological approach to the respective problem.

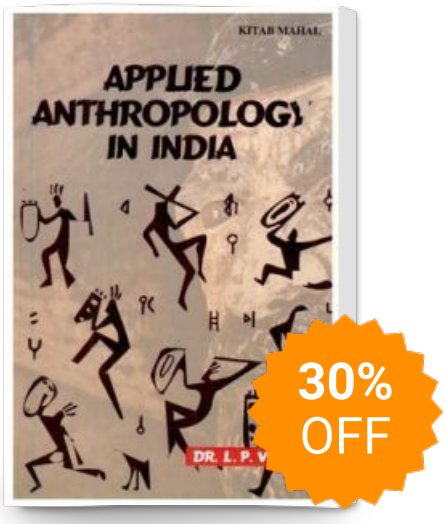
The tribal research centres—established during the last ten years in Bihar, Orissa, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Assam have, from time to time, brought out their respective bulletins and a few other publications dealing with tribal culture and problems. These publications, in general, provide materials of a substantive nature on the tribes inhabiting the respective areas. From time to time, they have also published materials on the economic, educational and demographic, hygienic conditions of the tribes. In dealing with the tribal problems, these publications reflect sympathy as well as appreciation of the welfare schemes. Instead of the principles of imposition and paternalism, idea of persuasion and self-determination are recommended.

The anthropological Survey of India.[8] though not directly related to the developmental programmes which cover various branches of anthropology (physical, cultural, linguistic, psychological and demographic), has published a series of bulletins containing rich ethnographic materials on the tribes, specially those of eastern India. In addition to the papers in the bulletins, a few books and memoirs, such as one on the Santal by Dutta-Majumdar (1956), Peasant Life in India ; A Study in Indian Unity and Diversity edited by Bose (1961) and Agriculture, Crafts and Weekly Markets of South Manbhum by Sinha *et. al.* (1961) deserve special mention. Moreover, the Director of the Survey functions as an advisor to the Government of India on matters about tribes.

There are a few publications relating to the evaluation of tribal development schemes, among which two deserve special mention, the Elwin Committee's report of 1960 on the special Multipurpose Tribal Blocks, and Dhebar Commission's report of 1961 containing recommendations for the scheduled areas and scheduled tribes.[9] These two reports deal with tribal problems and make a number of recommendations in all spheres of tribal reconstruction. Specially in the Dhebar Commission's report, recommendations have been made to allow a tribe to develop according to its own "genius" and the imposition of values has been discouraged.

The introduction of the Community Development Programmes in rural India, after the independence, has not only stimulated village studies from the theoretical and methodological points of view but also encouraged a number of researches from

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