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Paper No. : 10 Theories and methods in social and cultural Anthropology

Module : 35 M.N. Srinivas, S.C. Dube, L.P. Vidyarthi



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Description of Module	
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 **Pathshala**
पाठशाला
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Contents

1. MYSORE NARASIMHACHAR SRINIVAS (1916 - 1999)

- 1.1 Sanskritization and Westernization
- 1.2 Secularization
- 1.3 Dominant caste
- 1.4 Vertical and Horizontal Caste solidarity
- 1.5 Village study

2. SHYAMA CHARAN DUBE (1922-1996)

- 2.1 Village study
- 2.3 Community development programme (CDP)
- 2.3 Political anthropology
- 2.4 Family planning research

3. LALITA PRASAD VIDYARTHI (1931-1985)

- 3.1 Sacred Complex
- 3.2 Nature-Man- Spirit complex
- 3.3 Tribal and folklore study
- 3.4 Issues related to Applied and Action Anthropology

Learning Objectives:

To study

- the contribution of eminent anthropologists:
 - Mysore Narasimhachar Srinivas
 - Shyama Charan Dube

- Lalita Prasad Vidyarthi
- Life history of anthropologists
- Theories and concepts emphasized/propounded by them.



1. MYSORE NARASIMHACHAR SRINIVAS (1916 - 1999)

He was born on 16 November 1916 in Mysore. He completed his B.A. in Anthropology and Sociology (1936) and Masters in Sociology from Mysore University in 1939. He obtained LLB (1940) and Ph. D. in Sociology (1945). He was appointed as University lecturer in Indian sociology at Oxford university (1948-51), Professor, University of Delhi(1959-72), Simon Visiting Professor , University of Manchester(1963) to name a few. He has received several prestigious awards such as S.C. Roy Memorial Medal (1958), Honorary Fellow of the Royal Anthropological Society of Great Britain and Ireland (since 1964) and many others.

He has conducted fieldwork in Coorg (1940-42), in Tamil Nadu for three months (1943), Andhra for three months (1944), Rampura in Mysore for 13 months (1948 and 1952). Based on the fieldwork among the Coorgs, he developed the concept of 'Brahminisation' which dealt with caste mobility. He authored and edited several renowned books and contributed more than fifty research articles in national and international journals. While Srinivas was staying in Stanford University in the USA, his field notes and other papers he was working on were lost due to a dormitory fire. He went on to recollect from memory the data he had collected and published *Remembered Village* in 1976, a unique ethnographic work. He had also published works such as *Caste in Modern India* in 1962, *Social Change in Modern India* in 1966 and edited *India's Villages* in 1955. . He died on 30 November 1999 in Bangalore.

He has studied issues relating to national integration, dowry, bride wealth, the effect of industrialization on villages, urban communities, hospitals, gender issues, etc. Srinivas has done prolific research to study regional culture of South India and propounded various concepts to understand caste mobility and social change in Indian society. These concepts are sanskritization, westernization, secularization, dominant caste and concept of vertical and horizontal caste solidarity. He viewed village as a vertical entity which consisted of several horizontal layers each of which is a caste.

1.1 Sanskritization and Westernization

Srinivas introduced the concept of Sanskritization in his book, *Religion and Society among Coorgs of South India (1952)* to throw light upon the process of Social change occurring among low caste Hindus and other groups in upward direction. It basically refers to a process by which a low Hindu caste group attempts to change its attributes that define it in order to claim a higher position in caste hierarchy particularly 'twice born (*dwija*) caste. The process involves a change in dietary habits from non-vegetarianism to vegetarianism and a change in one's occupational habit. The claim is usually made

over a period of a generation or two, before arrival is conceded. Sanskritization often results in upward mobility for a particular caste but mobility may also occur without Sanskritization and vice-versa. Generally a caste claims a position which its neighbours are not willing to acquire. Harijan caste in Mysore does not accept cooked food and even drinking water from their superior caste, Smiths. The glimpse of Sanskritization is visible in almost all villages of India. In Bihar, Rajwars, a scheduled caste, claim themselves as Rajvanshi Kshatriya.

Sanskritization often results in upward mobility for a particular caste, but mobility may also occur in absence of Sanskritization and vice-versa. But the mobility related to Sanskritization causes positional changes in the system and not structural changes. Sanskritization may accompany erosion of cultural autonomy of the women folk, changes in family structure (inclination towards Hindu joint family) and a stronger caste organization with a higher tendency of out casting. Expanding means of transport and communication have hastened the Sanskritization process because of developing opportunities of cultural contact.

Sanskritization brought changes within the framework of Indian tradition whereas westernization was a change resulting from the contact of British socio-economic and cultural innovations. Westernization is a process which includes all cultural changes and institutional reforms inflicted upon Indian society as it came in political and cultural proximity with British rule and governance. The changes occurred in various attributes of Indian society namely technology, institutions, ideology and beliefs. Westernization incorporates scientific approach, individualism, egalitarianism, rationalism and liberalism, rise of nationalism, establishment of technological and educational institutions and new political culture and leadership in the nation. It has assigned some flexibility to the earlier rigid caste system, promoted disintegration of joint family and induced several social reform activities. Abolition of sati is a prominent example of the impact of westernization.

1.2 Secularization

Srinivas opined that British rule accompanied secularization of Indian society and cultural institutions which over a period of time became stranger with increased spatial mobility, urbanization and advent of modern education. Unlike Sanskritization, It is a more generalized process affecting all Indians and not only Hindus and tribal population. Rationalism is an important trait of this process which aided to change individual and social life by replacing traditional ideology by modern views and ideas through principle of reason.

1.3 Dominant caste

Srinivas developed the concept of dominant caste in his paper '*Dominant caste in Rampura*'. A dominant caste is any caste that has numerical strength, economic power through ownership of land, political power and high place in local hierarchy in a village community. If a caste ranks low in the social hierarchy, it can become the dominant ruling caste or group in a village if it is numerically large, owns land and has political influence over village matters. The dominant caste plays a vital role in settlement of disputes even in case of non-dominant caste groups.

1.4 Vertical and Horizontal Caste solidarity

Srinivas viewed that some common cultural elements were shared by all castes residing in a locality from highest to lowest. Brahmins and Harijans of a particular area utilize common dialect and share common beliefs and ideas. Srinivas called this unity of caste as **vertical solidarity**. On the other hand, Brahmins of north, south and central India have common Sanskritic elements irrespective of their regions and languages. He termed this process as **horizontal solidarity**.

1.5 Village study

Srinivas considers village as the microcosm of Indian society and civilization. It is the village, which retains the traditional composition of India's tradition. He viewed village as a vertical entity which consisted of several horizontal layers each of which is a caste. In the Book - *Remembered Village (1976)*, Srinivas talks about social and economic reforms, which have taken place in Rampura.

2. SHYAMA CHARAN DUBE (1922-1996)

S. C. Dube was born on 25 July 1922 in Seoni in Madhya Pradesh. He received a degree in Political Science. The course in Political Science had a special paper in Social Anthropology. He then conducted a study of the Kamars of Raipur in order to formulate a doctoral dissertation in Sociology. Dube studied their society holistically using traditional anthropological methods.

Dube became lecturer at Nagpur and Osmania University. He even went to England as a Lecturer in Anthropology. In the early 1950, he developed keen interest in village studies, especially of those villages which had a multi-caste social structure. He came back to India to study a village in Hyderabad called Shamirpet. He studied the interrelationships of Hindus and Muslims to understand

jati relationships that existed between communities. Dube, as a part of field research, also studied the impact of community development planning on villages.

He conducted field researches in Chhattisgarh, Telangana (A. P.) and West Orissa. He attended the World Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences at Vienna and the UNESCO working group on human progress and technological change held at Paris in 1953. In 1962 he went to Pakistan as a UNESCO consultant to advise on a major study of leadership in that country. He attended many seminars and conferences around the world.

He won the S. C. Roy Gold Medal (1976), the Indira Gandhi Gold Medal (1993). In 1972, he became the Director of the Indian Institute of Advanced Studies till 1978. He was the Chairman (1983-88) of the Madhya Pradesh Higher Education Grants Commission. He was granted an honorary doctorate from Kashi Vidyapeeth (1987) and Kanpur (1994) University. He also gave the K. K. Birla Foundation Lecture in 1995. He died in 1996.

His important publications include- The Kamar (1954), Indian Village (1955), India's Changing Villages: Human Factors in Community Development (1958) and Power and Conflict in Village India. He has contributed many important articles in renowned books and several research articles in national and international journals. His major contribution to field of Social Anthropology is discussed below.

2.1 Village study

In his book Indian village (1955) Dube elucidates the complete study of village Shamirpet in Telangana. The book presents adequate information to historical, geographical and political background as well as social, economic and religious practices of village in India. His aim has been to present a clear picture of an Indian village life and has basically used structural-functional approach. He stated that economic system of rural India is based on occupational mobility, interdependence and caste's functional specialization. He emphasized that caste ranking in villages mainly relies on rituals and not economic system. Family ceremonies, Village ceremonies and communal festivals are major types of religious services and festivals are observed in the village. The Muslims and Hindus interact with each other during festivals.

2.2 Community development programme (CDP)

Dube in his book India's Changing Villages: Human Factors in Community Development (1958) explains the impact of CDPs on Indian villages. He strongly emphasized the importance of human

elements in community development. He evaluated the changes and problems emerged from these programmes. He also worked on Red tapism in Indian bureaucracy.

2.3 Political anthropology

In his paper entitled, 'Dominant Caste and Village Leadership', Dube suggested that political power was restricted to few individuals rather than diffused in caste. Srinivas considered concept of dominant caste pivotal in evaluation of power relation in rural social life. Dube disagreed from Srinivas in view of notion of dominant caste. He emphasized that caste ranking in villages mainly relies on rituals and not economic system. However in certain instances as in case of Coorgs of South India economic dominance signifies high status owing to ritual rationalization. In each village, there are some dominant individuals, who have decisive say in political participation of the members of a village.

2.4 Family planning research

In one of his monograph on family planning he studies the diffusion of IUCD (intra-uterine contraceptive device) on family planning in India. The study emphasized the necessity to develop a criterion to measure variables related to general background variables indicating life orientation and life style of the respondents.

3. LALITA PRASAD VIDYARTHI (1931-1985)

Lalita Prasad Vidyarthi is a familiar name in contemporary Indian anthropology. He was born on 28th February 1931 in a village near Patna. In 1950 he secured B.A degree. from Patna College. He obtained a M.A. degree (1953) in Anthropology from Lucknow University. L. P. Vidyarthi was taught in Lucknow University by D. N. Majumdar. He received his Ph. D. degree (1958) from Chicago University. He worked under the very famous anthropologists Sol Tax, Robert Redfield at Chicago.

He came back to Bihar University and joined as a Reader and Head of the Department of Anthropology (1958-1968). He was appointed a Professor in 1968, continuing as Head of the Department. L. P. Vidyarthi worked on issues relating to Applied Anthropology and Action Anthropology till his death. His efforts raised the status of Anthropology department, Ranchi University as U.G.C. Department of Special Assistance (1978). Its status was raised by the establishment of Centre of Advanced Study In Anthropology (1985). He played a vital role in putting

Indian Anthropology on the world map. He was instrumental in ensuring that major journals in International Anthropology incorporated Indians and their journals as abstracts, contents or as a showcase for their comments regarding major issues in Anthropology. He died on 1st December 1985.

He was a winner of several fellowships and awards such as Ford Foundation Award (1957), University of Chicago fellowship (1957), Indo- USSR Cultural Exchange Fellowship (1959), Rome Civic Reception Bronze Medal (1976) and many others. He directed large scale research projects like Urban Pattern of Ranchi (1960), The Birhor Action Research Project (1966), Sacred Complex in Kashi (1972-76) and many more. He has authored several renowned publications. Some of these are *Sacred Complex In Hindu Gaya (1961)*, *The Maler: Nature-Man- Spirit Complex in Hill Tribe of Bihar (1963)*, *Cultural Contours of Tribal Bihar (1964)* and *Trends in World Anthropology (1980)*.

The concept of ‘Sacred Complex’ is his contribution which helps us to understand cultural processes operating in Indian Civilization. He has written extensively on the tribals of the Bihar and Chotanagpur region, and also propounded theoretical ideas considered as hallmarks of Indian Anthropology. He was also interested in folklore research, fieldwork, leadership studies and anthropological theories. He was appointed by the Planning Commission to head the Task Force for the Development of the Backward Areas. The concept of the Tribal Sub Plan was a result of this Task Force. His major contribution to field of Social Anthropology is discussed below.

3.1 Sacred Complex

Vidyarthi conducted an extensive study of sacred city of Gaya and developed the concept of ‘Sacred complex’ which he described in renowned book *Sacred Complex in Hindu Gaya (1961)*. He suggests three components namely, *a sacred geography, a set of sacred performances and sacred specialists* which collectively constitute *Sacred complex*. Sacred complex presented a picture of national unity and denoted an integrated pattern as it served as merging point of different traditions, castes and cultures. He stated that the sacred complex of a Hindu place of pilgrimage reflects a level of continuity, compromise and combination between Great and Little traditions. The sacred specialist of a pilgrimage transmits certain elements of the Great tradition to the rural population of India by popularizing certain texts and by officiating as the ritual and temple priests.

In recent times, due to the process of modification and transformation, the secular zone of Gaya has been expanding at the cost of shrinking sacred zone. One of the main sacred performances being performed at Gaya is *Gaya Shraddha* (form of sacrifice to ancestral spirits). All the sacred performances are led by *Gayawal Brahmins* (an orthodox priestly caste). The Gayawal Brahmins have *jajmani* relationship with patrons located in various parts of the Hindu universe. Pilgrims, from

different parts of the country and from different levels of culture, interact at the sacred complexes. Hence the sacred complexes are regarded as centres of civilization.

3.2 Nature-Man- Spirit complex

Professor Vidyarthi studied Sauria Paharia tribe (Malers) of Sahebganj district and described the complex phenomenon '*Nature-Man-Spirit complex*'. The term 'Nature' implies the interaction between the Malers and their ecological surroundings. Vidyarthi found that forest play a vital role in the life of Malers. They were dependent upon the hill and forest produce for their survival and livelihood. Moreover different spirits resided in the forest. The term 'Man' signified the social institutions of the tribe such as family and marriage. Under the term 'Spirit' he included the notion of spirit and supernatural world, as evident in life of the Malers. He observed the existence of ancestor worship among the Malers. They strongly believe that spirits of dead ancestors have power to decide their destiny

Sacred geography of Malers includes- sacred area and sacred centre. The sacred area includes the entire village and its surroundings. Sacred centres are sacred spots where rituals and religious activities are performed. Sacred performances of Maler include worship offered to *Gosaiyan (spirits)* on different occasions and rituals.

Vidyarthi basically employed a methodological framework to examine the tribal lifestyle from the focal point of ecological setting (Nature), social institutions (Man) and spiritual world (Spirit).

3.3 Tribal and folklore study

His book titled '*Cultural Contours of Tribal Bihar*' (1966) throws light upon various aspects of social institutions of tribes of Chota Nagpur. The book '*Tribal Culture of India*' (1976) authored by him and Dr. B.K. Roy provides comprehensive information on folklore, art, course of life and even matriliney and polyandry in tribal India. He has collected valuable information and analyzed folklore of Maler associated with their ecological setting, family, economics, religion and cultural history, which he mentioned in his book on Maler (1963). He had keen interest in folklore of Magahi, Bhojpuri and tribal zones of Bihar.

3.4 Issues related to Applied and Action Anthropology

L. P. Vidyarthi extensively worked on issues concerned with Applied Anthropology and Action Anthropology. In 1967, a task force was appointed under him to study the effect of various kinds of planning on the tribal population. He was thus able to formulate plans for tribals that suited them. This was included in his work *Applied Anthropology in India (1968)*. In 1968, he wrote on the effect of industrialization among tribal societies.

