The Future of Anthropology

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Vinay Kumar Srivastava

This paper submits that practical concerns have overtaken the theoretical in contemporary anthropology, especially in India. A perilous consequence of this trend is that instead of illuminating the functioning and dynamics of society and culture in particular and general terms, it confines itself to the question of policy prescription. By directing their energies to the 'issue∴ of usefulness', anthropologists have come to think that the future survival of anthropology is incumbent upon its immediate market value. The future of anthropology can be enhanced, instead, by giving primacy to an interpretive understanding of societies and cultures, thereby making comments on existing policies for development and social justice more perceptive and relevant.

THE future of their discipline, or one of its offshoots, has seriously concerned the anthropologists. Several seminars and workshops have been held under the aegis of 'retrospect and prospect' or the 'relevance of anthropology', where thoughts of the possible futures of our subject have figured. One of the topics of addresses and discussions in the centenary meeting of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland (RAI), the proceedings of which appeared in *Man* in 1944, was 'The Future of Anthropology'.[1] Murray Leaf's *Frontiers of Anthropology*, a book of 1974, carried a chapter in the end, on the 'anthropology of 2000' (pp 311-24). The statement − 'Anthropology has a notorious past, dismal present, and uncertain future' − broadly summarises our collective anxiety about the integrity of our discipline and its survival [Srivastava 1986]. In other words, regardless of the time and the progress of anthropology, its professionals have often pondered over its future.

Questions of the future begin zooming large when a culturally-constructed time period is to be replaced by another. One may imagine how bold and big this question would be when a century is to be replaced. In the 1990s, many contributions have appeared on the future of anthropology; some important ones are by Hart (1990), Kahn (1990), Sponsel (1990), Firth (1992), Grimshaw and Hart (1993), and Giddens (1996). None of these writers even hints that anthropology is devoid of a future. That we are contemplating the future itself strikes a chord of optimism: there is a future *of, for,* and *in* anthropology. But, where does it lie? In theory or policy prescriptions, or in a better, evolving relationship between the two? In making the discipline frontierless, unbounded, or in a precise delineation of its aims? What is our vision of future for which anthropology should be made to work? [Hart 1990; 14; Firth 1992: 208].

Why does the question of their discipline's future worry anthropologists? To my knowledge, such a question is generally not raised in other subjects.[2] Is the crisis in anthropology, wherein storms the debate about its future, imaginary? Is it simply a panic button so that the quality of research improves with continued introspection? In a strongly-worded article, Keith Hart (1990:14) says that British anthropologists are 'overspecialised, fragmented, alienated from the society in which the majority of people live,' and they lack 'any vision of [their] own or humanity's future'. This has also been the conclusion of many observers of national anthropologies [Pathy 1981; Gerholm and Hannerz 1982; Hastrup 1987; Mahajan and Srivastava 1978].

Today, anthropology discovers itself in a multicultural world of reflexivity which 'demands new forms of inventiveness and subtlety' [Clifford 1986:23]. We are sceptical of and wish to enquire into 'all grounds of authority, assumption, or convention' [Fischer 1986:194].[3] Knowledge-producers in the contemporary world are not just academic professionals. Journalists, media persons, tele producers, film makers, and even bureaucrats, are concerned with all those social issues on which we anthropologists claimed intellectual monopoly some years ago. A programme, for instance, on the Yanomamo Indians made and telecast by Discovery Channel, is not only worth thousands of words, but reaches millions of cross-cultural viewers [refer Giddens 1996: 121]. Today, anthropology finds itself in the midst of myriad theoretical perspectives, the contest between them is not like the blood-feud which characterised the relation between the descent and the alliance theorists in British anthropology. Contesting paradigms co-exist today with exemplary tolerance of another's vantage point. These are the times of post-modernity, post-structuralism, post-

colonialism, post-savage, post-positivism; or as Geertz (1998:69) says, of 'post-everything'. Anthropology faces a set of new challenges in this world.

Against the background of the contemporary practice, this paper outlines the conditions which will affect the future of anthropology. Not offered here are the tasks for the 21st century. Unless adequate steps are taken, the already existent crises of ecosystem, resources, society and culture are bound to escalate with the passage of time, and the anthropological researches will be expected to understand the genesis of these crises and suggest remedies. The practising anthropologists are hopeful about the contribution their discipline can make to ameliorate human condition. Marketability of anthropological skills (especially fieldwork) has been recognised by development and welfare organisations, but the full potentiality of the subject is yet to be tapped.

So far, a study of the impact of anthropology on its learners has not been carried out, but I learnt from my students that anthropology brought about a marked difference in their orientation to life.[4] They developed a higher degree of sensitivity to other human beings and their problems, besides trying to understand the 'other' (a fellow being, a community, a group) in holistic terms. Some Indian bureaucrats, who read anthropology as one of the subjects for the civil services examination, told me about the profound impact that anthropology made on them. In their actual workings, they have become comparative, analytical, field-oriented, and contextual. Now they understand human predicaments in a better perspective.[5] Yet, anthropology is not the first subject-priority of a college student who casts his eyes on courses which promise him a lucrative profession.[6]

At the outset, I submit that the future of anthropology will depend upon its conception that we hold and reproduce didactically. If its vision is of a discipline

without frontiers, then we have already started ringing its death knell. Further, anthropology's future is conditioned by the sound analytical and theoretical perspectives that we are able to generate. We cannot sustain it by an array of policy suggestions, the long list of pleas, viz, 'what should be done?' A dialectical relationship exists between theoretical conclusions and the areas of application. In it rests the strength of anthropology. We also note with concern the woeful decline in the quality of fieldwork (especially by Indian anthropologists and neophytes) and in the sophistication of analysis.

II

In 1978, six young anthropologists from the University of Delhi, three each from physical and social anthropology, decided to launch a journal with their pooled resources titled *Spectra of Anthropological Progress*. Its acronym *SAP* acquired popularity in academic circles in years to roll. These men were crystal clear about their aim. They did not want to merely add another volume to gather dust on the library shelves. They were deeply concerned with the question of *quo vadis*: whither goeth anthropology?[7]

The inaugural issue of *SAP* (1978: i-iii) carried a brief editorial which spelled out the direction anthropology had taken, its overspecialisation, concluding that the specialised research did not quite connect itself with the central aims of anthropology. Twenty years later, Bhattacharya (1999: 24-5) observed that the 'distancing of archaeology from anthropology has now gone to the ultimate. It is a consequence of this that archaeologists are now trying to have their own agenda of ethnology which need not concern itself with cultural themes.' The likelihood of unconnected and ceaseless specialisations existed in anthropology, because, to begin with, it dealt with two facts – the biological and the cultural – and each one of them could become the pivot of a separate discipline with its distinct methodology, terminological apparatus, and epistemology. The relation of the observer with the observed is bound to be different in a biological science in contrast to a socio-cultural discipline.[8]

The *SAP* editors did not denigrate the tendency of overspecialisation, seeing it as an index of the progress and development of a subject. However, they advised the specialists to think carefully of their grounding in the parent discipline and relate their specialisation to it. Otherwise, the specialist's work would become alien to the anthropological concerns. Moreover,

he would be marginalised in other disciplines he intends to venture into. If this differentiation of the discipline is permitted to go unchecked, with no attempt to integrate the new branches with the goal of anthropology, the danger is that the specialisations will fall apart. The Spencerian proposition – 'Integration compensates for differentiation of parts' – asserts the truism. Anthropologists should devote themselves to the task of integrating their discipline. Each stream of differentiation must relate to the central aims of anthropology. If we proceed in this manner, a higher differentiation of the discipline will inevitably imply a higher degree of integration.

A discipline should not be allowed to become pigeon-holed, for this would render intense inbreeding, thus lowering its creativity and scholarship and eventually, making it sterile. At the same time, let it not become so porous that, as in our case, almost every biological, sociological, or cultural study of humans could claim a place in anthropology. We already know of health scientists, historians, experts in foreign affairs, journalists, film makers, and many others, who not only call themselves anthropologists, but compete with hard-core anthropologists for scarce funds for research, tenurial positions, chairs of committees, awards, etc.[9] Osmosis is creative; flooding is destructive. We may borrow theories and techniques of analysis from other disciplines to understand our data better or to illuminate our concerns. But the crises, which the *SAP* editors called the 'identity crises', surface when a specialisation of some other subject is placed under the rubric of anthropology by an enthusiast without its relationship with the principal anthropological concerns being properly worked out.

It is not only with respect to physical anthropology that social anthropologists, or vice versa, find it difficult to maintain academic communication and to undertake collaborative research, but within social (or physical) anthropology, a number of branches have emerged which increasingly emphasise their separation. Each of these, what I would call, 'special anthropologies' (such as linguistic anthropology, medical anthropology, ecological anthropology, demographic anthropology, etc), which acquired prominence in the second half of the 20th century, interacts with another full-fledged discipline having its own history and preoccupations. Linguistic anthropology, for instance, has an intimate connection with linguistics, in the same way as is the proximity of ethnomusicology to the science of music.

Closeness to other disciplines applies to the main branches of anthropology as well; for example, the British social anthropology is considered closer to French sociology; and cultural anthropology, the American variant, to history and folklore. However, not all the practitioners of social or cultural anthropology assumed that their subject was a branch of humanities or one of the specialisations of the arts. Radcliffe-Brown (1948), the chief architect of British social anthropology, ardently believed that his subject was a natural science of society. Similarly, the American neo-evolutionist, Leslie White (1943) considered the natural science of culture as culturology, a term most dear to him. But these analogies between social or cultural anthropology on the one hand and natural science on the other, were based on an assumed isomorphism of methods and techniques. The methodology employed for the study of natural systems was extendible to social systems.[10]

The idea that social or cultural anthropology was a science of society or culture, or both as Kroeber's (1948:5) collocation socio-cultural anthropology suggested, did not imply its active interaction with biological or natural sciences. None of the campaigners of the scientific status of social or cultural anthropology ever thought of working out its relationship with physical anthropology (or archaeology), or of planning a study in which these branches could be meaningfully integrated. Radcliffe-Brown (1952) and Evans-Pritchard (1951) wrote extensively on the nature of social anthropology and the relation it bore with psychology, history, and sociology, but never chose to examine its kinship with physical anthropology or archaeology.[11]

It may be suggested that the relationship between social and physical anthropology in the British tradition was almost like that of the kinspersons who stood back to back. But, it did not imply any hostility or competition between them. Social and physical anthropology (and also archaeology) were non-interacting disciplines but sharing the same hearth. Social anthropology forged its alliance with sociology and history, whilst physical anthropology (which in Britain is called biological anthropology) shared common concerns with medicine and other biological sciences.[12] Anthropology, therefore, can be conceptualised as a myriad of disciplines having close contact with other independent subjects, rather than amongst themselves.

The pattern established in Britain at the beginning of this century has continued till date. Separate departments of physical,

social, and archaeological anthropology exist in British universities, and are placed under the faculty of anthropology. Interaction between these departments is negligible. Each one of them is almost like a *gemeinschaft*. Anthropology for the British is either biological anthropology, or social anthropology, or archaeology. The issue of its integration does not worry them. Nor do they engage themselves with the question of what 'anthropological' part in physical anthropology is homologous to the 'anthropological' quiddity in social anthropology? The British pattern is replicated in many other universities of the world. At the level of the work, the micro-studies take precedence over the philosophical discussions about a discipline's total identity, integration, and the boundary-maintaining mechanisms.

The American anthropology began with its division into physical anthropology and ethnology, the latter being further segmented into cultural anthropology, linguistic anthropology, and prehistoric archaeology. Physical anthropology studied bio-genetic facts, while culture in all its manifestations, and in spatio-temporal dimensions, was the key concept in ethnology. Although not clear in the beginning on how biological and cultural facts could be meaningfully integrated in a study, American anthropology nevertheless furthered its holistic conception. The textbook definition (almost like a 'holy litany') that anthropology is the 'study of man in all his aspects in time and space', seems to me an American view. The founders of professional anthropology in America insisted on an integrated anthropology. We are reminded of Franz Boas (1948) for whom fieldwork meant the collection of socio-cultural, archaeological, linguistic, and biological facts of a given people. This was the encyclopaedic approach to anthropology which is amply reflected in the American textbooks. Some American scholars have discussed the issue of the integration of anthropology at the level of the syllabuses, teaching and research seminars, and common projects and investigations [Tax 1956; Godelier 1974; Leaf 1974, 1979]. But they were all conscious of the fact that the subject was fast fragmenting. Their concern can be estimated from Eric Wolf's aptly-titled article: 'They divide and subdivide and call it anthropology' (*New York Times*, November 30, 1980).

Because of these divergent specialisations, which are strange bedfellows, anthropology has become a 'dilettante's discipline', including in its scope 'literally anything from lemur feet to shadow plays'

[Rabinow 1977:3].[13] In a trenchant criticism of overspecialisation, Needham (1970:46) envisaged an 'iridescent metamorphosis' of anthropology. The field might be redistributed among many other disciplines.[14] Many authors have reconciled to the academic disintegration of anthropology and see their works as part of the 'metamorphosis' of which Needham spoke.[15] Anthropology today is a 'group of subjects'.[16]

III

Integration of anthropology has the following facets: first, certain aspects of human existence can be fully comprehended when equal attention is given to its biological and socio-cultural dimensions. Some 'special anthropologies' lie at the confluence of biological and socio-cultural anthropology; for example, ecological anthropology, demographic anthropology, medical anthropology, and the anthropology of development. Other anthropologies are preeminently biological, but use several socio-cultural factors and indices; anthropology of growth and physiological anthropology may be cited as examples. Even in highly technical fields such as foetal anthropology, one cannot ignore the political economy of health and various declarations of the international organisations (like UNICEF) [Chandra 1990].

In those specialisations which are at the interface, a restriction of analysis to either fact (biological or socio-cultural) is bound to be myopic. Medical anthropologists know full well that if illness is cultural, disease is a pathological concept. Pain is both a culturally-constructed reality and also, biologically inscribed on the body. The first lesson a student learns is that medical anthropology is a bio-cultural discipline. We analyse the medical system as a biological system and as a socio-cultural system, which we further break down, following the systemic approach, into social system and cultural system. In the integration of the three subsystems of the medical system can one locate the spirit of medical anthropology [Forter and Anderson 1978; for similar argument on Indian material see Joshi and Mahajan 1990, Bhasin and Srivastava 1991].

A similar argument can be adduced for demographic and ecological anthropologies. Some of us may be sceptical of the place I have given to the anthropology of development, for this specialisation is dominated by social anthropologists. Those who think that development has nothing to do with physical anthropology are mistaken because the issue of the biological

survival of people is of utmost importance. We have a significant literature on the diseases caused by development, and how the health of the natives was jeopardised as a consequence of the measures the planners and development specialists thought were ameliorative [Kunitz 1994]. For depopulating tribes, the health-related programmes score priority over those dealing with cultural matters. Development is a bio-cultural phenomenon, and for the future survival of anthropology, this notion is crucial.

Besides this, another way to integrate anthropology is to generate a paradigm which can explain both the biological and cultural facts. In one such attempt, Mahajan and I (1978) examined the possibility of using dialectical materialism to integrate anthropology. Jan Wind suggested the use of cybernetics for a similar purpose (Personal communication, December 12, 1978). Neo-Darwinian philosophical traditions could also be explored [Ashley Montagu 1960, 1981]. Forde (1948) argued that ecology can unite physical with social anthropology. Howsoever promising these theoretical insights are, they have not become popular in our subject. Whatever integration is visible it is at the level of studies which require a knowledge of both physical and socio-cultural anthropology.

IV

One of the consequences of the American encyclopaedic approach is that anthropology has gradually become more and more porous and spongy, offering a respectable place to people from varied disciplines, but losing its identity in the process.[17] What has really been detrimental to its progress is the oft-repeated statement, pronounced with boastfulness and pomposity, that it is a subject without frontiers, without boundaries. The protagonists of this view present a catalogue of different anthropologies and show several empty shelves to the academic world where more and more specialisations could be placed.[18] We may beam with satisfaction on seeing a huge list of anthropologies, but in this process we have eroded the concerns of the discipline. The future of anthropology depends upon these pivotal concerns, and not on the unwieldy list of its specialisations.

Often, a question like 'what is anthropological' in 'economic anthropology', or in 'medical anthropology', or in any other 'special anthropology', is asked. We want to know the distinctions between collateral disciplines or interests – for instance, between political science, political sociology, political philosophy, and political

anthropology. Engaging debates ensue on whether the study of economic systems of tribes and peasants be termed 'economic anthropology' or 'anthropological economics'. Such taxonomic debates are in other specialisations as well. Some scholars believe that if we opt for titles such as 'anthropological economics', or 'anthropology of development', or 'ethnolinguistics', then we emphasise in them the anthropological content more than that of the other discipline with which they interact.

Whether or not we accept the suggestion about a proper nomenclature of the discipline or its branch, there is no doubt that such borderline or inter-disciplinary enterprises are required to interact with other disciplines. The student of 'anthropological economics' or 'economic anthropology' needs to acquire an arduous competence in economic theory and techniques of analysis. In a similar vein, an anthropologist of transcultural psychiatry is expected to be 'familiar with western psychiatry, its modes of treatment, and its concept of man. In such disciplines, the anthropologist has to do an extra labour – to gain competence in another subject. Dalton remarked that 'economic anthropologists' suffer from 'nervous inferiority' while corresponding their ideas with hardcore economists who tend to look down upon their counterparts in anthropology [Dalton 1971: 30]. Similar observations can be culled from the practitioners of other borderline anthropologies who have to interact regularly with other closely allied subjects. One would like to read a detailed account of the professional experiences of a medical or physiological anthropologist working in a hospital or medical college, and trying to justify his place amidst those who might consider such positions as sheer appendages, easily dispensable.[19]

Needham (1970:40) called an anthropologist's encounter with the other discipline(s) 'awkward'. It is bound to generate 'nervous inferiority' in him unless he stands on the steady feet of his discipline, is committed to intellectual osmosis, and constantly reminds himself of his goals and purposes. If he is an 'economic anthropologist', he judiciously and critically examines the propositions of economics to determine their suitability in understanding his data. He does not use his data to illuminate or support the economic theory. When his aims are lopsided, his encounter with economics will become 'awkward' rather than fruitful, and he will suffer from 'nervous inferiority' in relation to the economist, rather than becoming a

'coparcener' in the production of alternative perspectives on society.

All this boils down to our own conception of anthropology. If a study of what different anthropologists mean by the subject is conducted, we shall come across highly divergent opinions. For many, anthropology *will be* what they *do*: the practice will define the subject and not the other way round. Some will subscribe to the encyclopaedic notion: there is anthropology in everything and everything can be studied anthropologically. Rarely do we ask: What is 'anthropological' in what I do?

V

Problems for an anthropologist's work 'can be found everywhere human beings are in communication' [Firth 1992:211], wherever groups are formed and sustained. The anthropologist's laboratory is the entire mankind; the way in which people structure the reality around them, is what he studies. The human universes are not 'museumified' entities, static, neatly-kept and catalogued. They are perpetually changing. Those orders (and institutions) which men themselves proudly created at one time are rejected by them at another time. Taxonomies are challenged; the catalogues need to be constantly updated. Human beings have tremendous capacity to perfect themselves. This process is however punctuated with crises – with contradictions and conflicts. Change is ceaselessly occurring; it is imperceptible and needs to be constructed. Geertz (1995:4) writes: 'Change, apparently, is not a parade that can be watched as it passes.'

The anthropologist did (and does) many things with societies and cultures. In the formative era, he studied the origin of institutions, customs, groups and collectivities, and the stages through which they were believed to have passed. Then, he compiled the detailed accounts of the past of these societies by focusing on the 'memory culture' of his respondents. How social institutions had diffused from the centre of their origin, or from one society to another, greatly interested him. In the wake of the repudiation of earlier pseudo-historical approaches and psychological reductionism, and the aimless documentation of cultural traits, came the much celebrated functional approach. With this, anthropology became a synchronic study, of 'here and now'. The criticism of functionalism revived many earlier approaches. The French became interested in the working of the human mind and unravelling its underlying structure. Their con-

temporaries in America, those who became popular as cognitive anthropologists, intended to study culture by getting into the heads of its bearers. Some French and American scholars applied the Marxian approach to the superstructure of society. Network analysis, transactionalism, modern variants of structuralism, feminism, reflexivity, interpretivism, have been other corrective alternatives.

The aforementioned approaches and their several kindred variations, known by different technical names, barring those which were conjectural, co-exist in contemporary anthropology. But, the most rallying is around the one which is concerned with meaning. Some of its advocates derive their intellectual authority from Weberian sociology and its further development in the hermeneutical tradition. In a nutshell, the contemporary anthropologists do the following. They conduct a lengthy fieldwork with a 'community' of people, far-away or nearer home.[20] During the course of study, they are 'hued' by the 'object' of study.[21] From this experience is born the ethnography.

Anthropology is a 'sceptical study' [Firth 1992:210]. It does not take anything for granted. Whether acknowledged or not, we begin with the Durkheimian rule: 'I do not know a social fact unless I have studied it' [Durkheim 1938]. Our aim is to understand the plexus of meanings people attribute to their thoughts and action. Alongside, we unravel those meanings and interconnections of institutions of which their creators may be unaware. We keep a distinction between the perspectives and analyses of the actor and the observer.

The anthropologist is an empiricist ('world-observer'), an interpreter ('world-describer'), a comparativist ('world-comparer'), and a futurist ('world-imaginer'), whose cosmic ambition is to know about the human society as a whole.[22] His aim is pre-eminently academic: to interpret and explain. It is not to delve in the charters of policy prescriptions.[23] Today, especially in India, many anthropologists are solely concerned with the issues of policy, churning out the agendas of action. Perhaps they feel that in this market-oriented world they have to be utilitarian. They try to prove their Darwinian fitness in the academic world as well as in the market-society by formulating hypothetical programmes for the betterment of human beings. Their comments on policies, lists of pleas, designs of action, scarcely rise above the commonplace.[24]

None of the scholars concerned with the future of anthropology has argued against action anthropology, putting knowledge

to real and concrete use.[25] Giddens (1996:126) writes: "Anthropology must be ready to contest unjust systems of domination, along the way seeking to decide what 'injustice' actually is, and be prepared to bring potentially controversial issues to light". For Hart (1990:14): "Anthropology is 'for' making a better, more democratic world for everyone". To achieve this, we should be 'politically' and 'morally' engaged with social problems. Our vision of future is of greater freedom and equality of human beings, both as a right and policy, and anthropology must work towards their achievement. Inspiration for applied work, Hart thinks, could be drawn from Leach's lectures published as *A Runaway World*? where he argued that anthropology could be used for resolving crises of the contemporary world. He also suggested that we should try to spread the anthropological vision amongst the mass audience.

Sponsel (1990) argues for greater involvement of anthropologists with the people they study. Grimshaw and Hart (1993:44) say that the 'resolution to anthropology's dilemma' requires new 'patterns of social engagement'. For Ingold (1994:xviii), anthropology is a 'science of engagement'. The 'subjects' of our research are not 'objects'; they are fellow beings. One of our duties is to take overt action to defend human rights. Cultural relativism is simply a 'frame of mind', a methodological tool. It does not imply, or should not be confused with, ethical relativism. The topic of universal human values and basic needs has become central to contemporary anthropology [Hatch 1983; Scupin and DeCorse 1995]. None should starve, none should be inflicted with physical or psychic torture, none should be stripped of basic human rights and needs, are some examples of universal values. The anthropologist should render his firm commitment to them in academic as well as practical terms. Firth's summary expresses it well: "[The] anthropologists must have a social awareness, a social conscience, some degree of commitment to the people among whom they work. Locally, an anthropologist can sometimes defend the peoples' interests against bureaucratic ignorance, the rapacity of salesmen or the arrogance of developers" [Firth 1992:219]. The role of anthropology in exposing various myths which perpetuate inequality in society is well acclaimed. And, famously known is its contribution in planning and executing development.

The applied role will definitely condition anthropology's future, but the list of suggestions, policy prescriptions, must

entail from a rigorously conducted study in which the focus is on understanding. Theoretical and applied researches are two sides of the same coin: 'knowledge for practice' and 'practice for knowledge' are intimately connected [Srivastava 1990: 316]. Before peoples' interests are defended, we should acquire a thorough knowledge of the conditions which breed rapacious salespersons or arrogant developers. Understanding and interpretation are placed before action, advocacy, and activism. A good anthropology is one which yields sound, detailed, and convincing knowledge of a society; and from this follows a culturally-rooted, endogenous, and holistic plan of development.

The social responsibility of the anthropologist has increased manifold presently. It is bound to enlarge further. Anthropology began in the mid-19th century as the evolutionary study of the entire human society. As it grew in time and space, especially with the addition of ethnology sections in museums, it progressively became a mode of producing knowledge of the 'exotic other', the 'primitive society'. By the time the term 'social anthropology' was invented for the Liverpool Chair founded in 1908 for James Frazer, the 'intellectual object' of anthropology – the savage, the pre-literate, the simple, the non-western – had been fully found. Gough (1968:403) writes: 'most of our fieldwork was carried out in societies that had been conquered by our own government'. The we-they distinction, or the distinction of the self and the other, was the pith of the anthropological work: '...anthropological knowledge came to be a map of difference, of alterity' [Das 1995:3]. That the 'they' was qualitatively different from the 'we' constituted the discourse. Anthropologists wrote what they thought was right, proper, and just, on and about the primitives, who were mute, who did not answer back [Giddens 1996: 121-2; Geertz 1998: 72]. The monographs thus produced were for the literate, white, western public.

Overtime, as a result of culture contact with modern societies, the primitives have been de-primitivised. No more are they 'they' in pristine terms, but are gradually assimilated with the 'we' [Geertz 1998]. As globalisation progresses apace, the difference between the 'we' and the 'they' narrows down tremendously. The erstwhile primitives now read and write; question the inquisitive ethnographer on the purpose of his study and wish to share the results of his enquiries; read monographs to discover their past moorings and also detect grave errors made by the anthropologist

in understanding their culture. The staunchest critics of ethnographic writings on a society are now its 'literate' people. They answer back and interrogate their ethnographers.[26] The latter has to be cautious about the veracity of ethnographic details he collects. Furthermore, the 'natives' now study their own societies where they enmesh their experiences of being a native with an objective project. Native anthropology, or autoethnography, as it is designated, brings with it its own commitments and values [Srivastava 1995b]. Anthropology is now produced in a different set of social conditions. It has to be far more reflective and humanistic.

This changed scenario does not suggest that we become 'subjective' in our approach. Rather, we have to combine the requirements of a dispassionate study with an unflinching commitment to universal human values and rights. Our methodology adheres to the principle of objectivity, whilst our 'practical anthropology' (to borrow Malinowski's term) does not compromise on the agenda of human welfare; it is value-loaded.[27] It is wrong to assume that if we 'side' with particular arguments regarding human condition, then we tend to lose our objectivity. To recall Cresswell (1968:411-2): 'A physicist can fulfil his sense of social responsibility by speaking out, for instance, against the use that politicians and the military make of the atom bomb he has made possible, without affecting the laws describing the behaviour of atoms and molecules'. In a similar way, we endeavour to understand human society as objectively as possible, but speak out against all those social contexts where human rights are abrogated, where values of equality are suppressed, where injustice prevails.

The people whom we study, wherever they live, are no longer hidden, forgotten, lost, or cloistered.[28] No more is the tribal society 'isolated', a 'complete society', an 'anthropological whole'. Not only the national but also the international economic systems affect the micro-societies. The genesis of rural poverty can be traced to the unjust social and economic system of the international order. Ethnicity has become a transnational phenomenon. The future anthropologists will need to study the socio-cultural aspects of international relations [Foster 1984; Wright 1988; Messer 1993; Cole 1995; Srivastava 1995a]. Impact of the fast-changing technology, global consumption patterns (overconsumption of a few co-existing with the underconsumption of many), shifting geo-political configurations, and new forms (and strategies) of domination

on human communities all over the world, are the areas of priority. The relation of the local with the global will be central to future anthropology [Moore 1996].

Although defined as the study of the entire human society, anthropology has predominantly dealt with tribals and peasants. Its emphasis in urban studies has been on slums and squatters, shanty satellite towns and migrants, religious communities, and lower-class neighbourhoods. It has not so far conducted detailed field-based studies of elite societies, of people who 'answer back' and reflect on the methods used and conclusions reached. The effect of functionalism, or any other method which searched for fixed categories, has been so overwhelming that we did not contribute much to the understanding of social turbulence. For the future survival of anthropology, it is imperative that we study societies in distress, in hunger, in collective pain and war [Das 1995; Nordstrom and Robben 1995]. We should apply anthropological knowledge to understand social issues and apprise the lay public in a de-jargonised language with our findings and suggestions for improvement. I may refer here to Bhattacharya's recent researches (1998) on the history of hunger and starvation. The lesson we learn is that no more is anthropology esoteric, the 'engagement of colonial masters' or the 'sport of kings'.[29]

VI

We have tremendous faith in the analytical ability of anthropology. Even other disciplines have been considerably influenced by anthropological perspectives. The future of our discipline is incumbent upon a better understanding of human society and culture, because from this will logically follow the steps to be undertaken for ameliorating human condition. Whether we are physical or social anthropologists, we view a system (biological, social, or cultural) in a state of dynamic equilibrium. We consider a number of factors—intrinsic and extraneous—which condition the working of systems. Biological and cultural factors should be seen as complementary, in a state of 'heuristic synergism' [Srivastava 1990: 314]. If we erroneously believe that one fact is 'superior' to the other, or is hermetically sealed, then we are likely to fission the discipline as well the 'tribe' of anthropologists (to borrow the popular words of Max Gluckman). We hear of incessant conflicts between physical and social anthropologists over the allocation of resources, and teaching and research positions in a department. These cleavages

reflect the orientations these 'sub-tribes' of anthropology have towards the two great anthropological constructions – the biology and the culture. Some physical anthropologists think that their accomplishments are true to the scientific tradition, whereas their counterparts in social anthropology are simply raconteur, not more than story-tellers. The social anthropologists may regard their work as more important, by claiming that their work begins where science ends. Instead, if we begin with a model of complementariness between different facts that concern us, the tenor of our research will be qualitatively different. We can learn a lot about it from the actual practice of medical anthropologists. The future of anthropology lies in such studies.

Anthropology is principally a field science. This is not to say that anthropologists have depended upon fieldwork for their ideas, but have always referred to the field for a critical scrutiny of their theories and ideas [Fox 1975]. Unfortunately, the quality of fieldworks, especially in Indian anthropology, has become poorer. Our students prefer to study their own societies rather than venturing into ethnographic landscapes where they struggle to learn a new language and pass through the non-assuaging pangs of loneliness. Since they study their own society, they start with the assumption that they know enough, thus overlooking the nuances, the finer points, the underlying currents, the subterranean elements, and the subtleties. It is here that they commit the error.[30] Needless to say, a good anthropology depends a great deal upon the quality of our fieldworks.

To sum up: a future *of* and *for* anthropology lies in constantly struggling to evolve a sophisticated theoretical and methodological apparatus, conducting solid fieldworks, and unswervingly subscribing to the premises of human rights, democratisation, welfare, and the development of people of all shades of life.

Notes

1 Four addresses were delivered on the futures of physical anthropology, archaeology, social anthropology, and material culture, respectively by G M Morant, V Gordon Childe, Raymond Firth, and R U Sayce. See *Man*, 1944, vol XLIV: 16-24.

2 However, I refer to a piece on the future of British sociology in Payne et al (1981).

3 In these words, Fischer (1986) has paraphrased Jean-Francois Lyotard's concept of the 'post-modern'.

4 For the last few years, I have been collecting data on this topic. At the close of the teaching session (generally mid-March), I make my

students write in whichever language (Hindi or English) they have adeptness a short essay on the impact of anthropology on their personal lives and orientations. I have read these essays, but so far have not analysed them properly. The observation I make here is based on these write-ups. The students have invariably noted that they became less prejudicial after studying anthropology. In this context I remember Firth, 'Ignorance and prejudice about other peoples, particularly peoples of a different colour, is still widespread, and it is part of our [anthropologists'] job to try and break it down' [Firth 1944: 22].

5 Before 1995, anthropology was one of the most popular options for the Indian civil services examination. Its popularity declined after its syllabi in both the papers was frighteningly increased. Many topics were included on which good reading material did not exist. My comments on the revised syllabi appeared in Hindi in *Pratiyogita Samrat*, January 1996, 4(12):53-4.

6 This observation is not only based on Indian experience. Many western writers have pointed this out. Mayer (1981:vii) noted that when Furer-Haimendorf decided to read anthropology, it was an 'unconventional choice'. A Delhi anthropologist, Abhimanyu Sharma, was reported (in *The Hindustan Times*, June 26, 1976) to have said that the 'rejected lot' of students joined anthropology. I rebutted his observation (*The Hindustan Times*, July 2, 1976). The drop-out rate of students in anthropology department is quite high; these students leave anthropology to seek admission in other coveted courses. The heads of anthropology departments all over the world are engaged in increasing the popularity of the subject amongst the wider public. See MacClancy and McDonaugh (1996).

7 These six Delhi anthropologists were Surinder Nath, V C Channa, S L Malik, Anil Mahajan, Lalit Kumar, and myself. Today, four of them are teaching in the Delhi department of anthropology. The other two are employed elsewhere but do the anthropological work. Later, P C Joshi, N K Chaddha and M P Sachdeva were also inducted in the editorial board of *SAP*. Chaddha is a psychologist but is reputed for many works on psychological anthropology. *SAP* continued its uninterrupted publication till 1991; then its publication was suspended following financial problems.

8 Because of his lengthy stay (often not less than a year or so) with a community, the social anthropologist develops almost quasi-permanent relations with its members. In many cases, he 'adopts' the community of people forever. Empathy, therefore, is an important element of the relationship between the observer and the observed. This is, however, absent in a physical anthropological work which treats its 'subjects' of study as mere 'objects'. In my opinion, physical anthropologists and archaeologists do not conduct the 'fieldwork' as social anthropologists define this term. Physical anthropologists may collect data from the field or laboratory situation. Archaeologists conduct excavations on sites likely to yield an industry of human artifacts. See Wolcott (1995) for the notion of fieldwork.

9 By 'hard-core' anthropologists, I mean those who have undergone a professional training in anthropology. They are not 'self-taught'

anthropologists. Today, sociologists write articles and books which bear the word 'anthropology' in their titles. 'Anthropology' has become a sort of 'discourse' in these writings rather than just remaining a discipline. Refer to works by Das (1995), Thapan (1998).

10 Leslie White (1943) submitted that all sciences dealt with energy and motion. Culture and civilisation were also forms of energy; the sciences were therefore unified methodologically. The organismic theorists developed the concept of society by comparing it systematically with that of the organism about which they knew well, courtesy the growth of biology. Organic analogy was a procedure to know the unknown ('society') with the help of the known ('organism'). See Harris (1968).

11 Well known are their conclusions of the status of social anthropology. For Radcliffe-Brown (1952), it was a branch of 'comparative sociology', another name of sociology according to Emile Durkheim. And, it was a kind of historiography for Evans-Pritchard (1951).

12 In his reply to Forde's question regarding the integration of anthropology's branches, Firth (1944:22) said that the four branches (physical anthropology, archaeology, social anthropology, and material culture) 'called for entirely separate disciplines, and that the ties of social anthropology were with sociology, rather than with physical anthropology or archaeology'.

13 Anthropologists are seen as those 'dilettantes who flit from one area to the next' [Kleinman and Copp 1993:6].

14 I have often heard of a suggestion that physical anthropology should be placed along with zoology; archaeology with ancient history; and social anthropology with sociology; and departments of anthropology should be done away with.

15 For instance, see Clifford (1986) and his joint venture, Writing Culture. He writes that 'man' has disintegrated as telos for a whole discipline (p 4).

16 Ingold writes: "...anthropology, as it exists today, is not a single field, but is rather a somewhat contingent and unstable amalgam of subfields, each encumbered with its own history, theoretical agenda and methodological preoccupations" [Ingold 1994: xiv] Also see, Moore. (1986:1): "Anthropology is no longer a singular discipline, if it ever was, but rather a multiplicity of practices engaged in a wide variety of social contexts".

17 In a recent paper, Sillitoe (1998:224) notes that agricultural economists, human geographers, and plant pathologists are 'stealing our ['anthropologists'] disciplinary clothes'. They themselves conduct the anthropological work required for their study. If I may add, the quality of their anthropological work is inferior which brings bad name to the subject.

18 In his keynote presentation at a seminar (on 'Anthropology in India: Problems and Prospects') in department of anthropology, Punjab University, Chandigarh, from March 6-9, 1986, Indera P Singh presented a long list of anthropological specialisations. An idea of special anthropologies can be gathered from the list of seminar topics prepared for the Xth International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (see Indian Anthropologist, vol 7, no 1, 1977, pp 68-70).

19 Here, we may refer to the following observation

from Needham: "The more the anthropologist specialises the more he will be obliged to observe the standard of the discipline that he enters; and if he is to induce the practitioners of that discipline to take serious notice of his knowledge and understanding of ethnographic evidence, he must in his own work earn their professional respect by conforming to the scientific or scholarly criteria which they acknowledge" [Needham 1970: 40].

20 Besides the conventional areas, the 'community' could be of laboratory scientists, homosexuals, psychiatric clients, drug addicts, sex workers, professionals and politicians, etc. Anthropologists have worked on the impact of the new reproductive technology on kinship, family, and gender [Strathern 1990] and on the ethnography of the immune system [Martin 1996]. The 'field' of research is not given; it has to be constructed. Geertz (1995:106) remarks: '...research sites are not found, they are made'.

21 Geertz (1995:210) describes this in the following words: "You don't exactly penetrate another culture, as the masculinist image would have it. You put yourself in its way and it bodies forth and enmeshes you".

22 Anthropology is as much about 'us' as it about 'them' – the 'other' culture [Leach 1982].

23 Giddens writes, 'The practical connotations of anthropology are likely to depend upon a rekindling of the anthropological imagination than upon a narrowing-down of the subject to limited social policy issues' [Giddens 1996: 125].

24 See for instance, Samal ed (1996), a book of six hundred pages.

25 This however is not the opinion of many other anthropologists; see Leach (1982), Beteille (1993). Hugh-Jones writes about Leach, '...throughout his [Leach] life he remained deeply suspicious of the supposed benefits of applied anthropology' [Hugh-Jones 1989: 14].

26 There are many cases where the people are aware of the fact that they were studied anthropologically. For instance, Pul Eliya, the Sri Lankan village which Leach studied, had a notice at its entrance placed many years after Leach had done his fieldwork there. It read: 'This is the village of the famous anthropological study' [Hugh-Jones 1989:21].

27 Some anthropologists believe that ethnography is not a fact but only personal opinion, a view which Firth termed 'egoistic or solipsistic anthropology' (1992: 219). For Leach (1987) as well as Hugh-Jones (1989:34), ethnography was fiction; for Geertz (1988) it was a 'literary enterprise'. But this is not the opinion which will help the future social anthropology.

28 But many coffee-table books on tribes may carry these words in their titles, or descriptions of people, in order to increase their sale. See, for instance, a French publication on Indian tribes titled L'Inde des Tribus Oubliees (Chene, Paris, 1993). Perhaps the publishers are motivated by the idea that the 'exotic' sells, the 'familiar' does not.

29 I have borrowed the last phrase from Godfrey Lienhardt. Lewis writes: "When Prince Charles began his anthropological study at Cambridge, Godfrey Lienhardt (at an RAI council meeting) quipped that 'anthropology had become the sport of kings' " [Lewis 1998: 567].

30 It is relevant to remember here Betcille's observation. He writes: "I have seen many

young British and American anthropologists return physically exhausted from the field, looking lean and hungry, like Cassius in the play. My Indian students show less wear and tear during their movements in and out of the field...Indian research scholars stretch field work out longer, doing it in several short spells, but rarely spend as much time in the field as their counterparts from overseas. They also rarely choose to do field work in a region other than the one to which they belong; this enables them to dispense with the trouble of learning a new language, and it allows them to take other shortcuts that in the end detract from the quality of their field work" (1996:234).

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