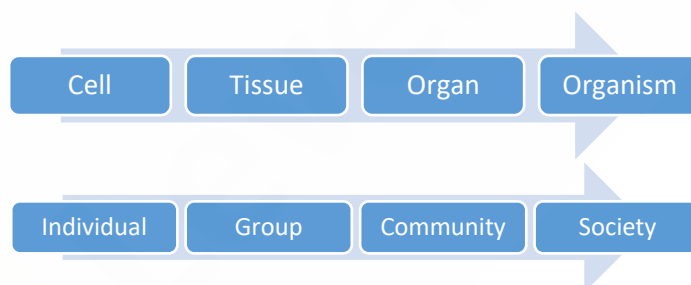# FUNCTIONALISM

Functionalism arose as a reaction to evolutionism and diffusionism in early twentieth century. Functionalists seek to describe the different parts of a society and their relationship by means of an organic analogy. The organic analogy compares the different parts of a society to the organs of a living organism. The organism is able to live, reproduce and function through the organized system of its several parts and organs. Like a biological organism, a society is able to maintain its essential processes through the way that the different parts interact. Institutions such as religion, kinship and the economy were the organs and individuals were the cells in this social organism. Functionalist analyses examine the social significance of phenomena, that is, the function they serve a particular society in maintaining the whole. **Bronislaw Malinowski and A.R. Radcliffe-Brown** had the greatest influence on the development of functionalism from their posts in Great Britain and elsewhere. Two versions of functionalism developed between 1910 and 1930: Malinowski's bio-cultural (or psychological) functionalism; and structural-functionalism, the approach advanced by Radcliffe-Brown.

Functionalism looks for the function or part that is played by several aspects of culture in order to maintain a social system. It is a framework that considers society as a system whose parts work together to promote solidarity and stability. This approach of theoretical orientation looks at both social structure and social function. It describes the inter-relationship between several parts of any society. These parts or the constituent elements of a society could be named as norms, traditions, customs, institutions like economy, kinship, religion etc. These parts are interrelated and interdependent.

Idea of function came up from an analogy drawn between an organism and society (organic analogy concept propounded by Herbert Spencer and Emile Durkheim).

Functionalism was mainly led by **Bronislaw Malinowski** and **A.R. Radcliffe Brown**. Both were purely functionalists but their approach slightly differed as Malinowski is known **as bio cultural functionalist** but Radcliffe-Brown is mainly known as **Structural Functionalist**. Malinowski suggested that each and every trait of culture exist to fulfil individual's needs, while Radcliffe-Brown focused on social structure rather than biological needs. He considered society as a system. He looked at institutions as orderly sets of relationships whose function is to maintain the society as a system.

MAIN SCHOOLS OF FUNCTIONALISM:

Two versions of functionalism developed between 1910 and 1930: Malinowski's functionalism; and Radcliffe-Brown's structural-functionalism.
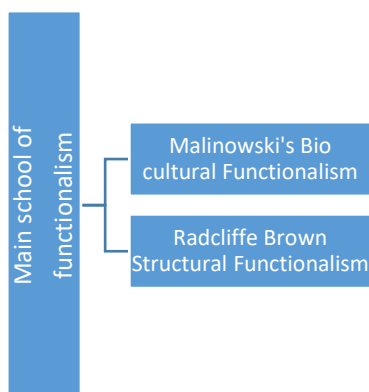
Malinowski's School:

Malinowski's definition of the term culture was given in 1931 in the Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences (1931:621-46). He wrote, " ...culture comprises inherited artifacts, goods, technical processes, ideas, habits and values". For Malinowski, social organisation is clearly a part of culture. In this respect, you will find that his definition of culture is quite similar to Tylor's (1881) definition. **Tylor** said that culture is 'that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, customs and all other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society'. A comparison between the two definitions shows that **Tylor stressed the complexity aspect while Malinowski emphasised the wholeness aspect of culture.**

Malinowski used the term culture as a functioning whole and developed the idea of studying the 'use' or 'function' of the beliefs, practices, customs and institutions which together made the 'whole' of a culture. He viewed different aspects of culture as a scheme for empirical research, which could be verified by observation. In this sense, we can say that Malinowski became an architect of what is known as the fieldwork method in anthropology/sociology.

Malinowski published the results of his painstaking fieldwork in 1922 in his famous monograph, **Argonauts of the Western Pacific**. Here, he used the concept of culture as a balanced system of many parts. He explained that the function of a custom or institution was to be understood in the way it helped to maintain the culture as a whole. Malinowski (1931: 621-46) instructed that a culture had to be studied in its own right... as a self-contained reality'.

DATA COLLECTION BY MALINOWSKI (PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION)

Franz Boas made a field-study among the Eskimos(Inuit) and later studied the American Indians(Kwakiutl) of the North-West coast (British Columbia, Canada). He gave special importance to learning the language of the people to be studied.

In England, anthropological field visits for collecting first-hand information were introduced by **A.C. Haddon** of Cambridge University. He led in 1878- 79 the famous expedition to the **Torres Straits** region of the Pacific. The purpose behind this expedition was to train scholars in conducting professional fieldwork. **In his team of fieldworkers, Haddon included specialists** in various academic areas. After spending four weeks in the Western islands and four months in the Eastern islands, the team collected information in **Pidgin-English** or with the help of interpreters. Special interests of the scholars were reflected in the publication of the expedition's reports. For example, W.H.R. Rivers wrote the chapters on personal names, genealogies, kinship and marriage. C.G. Seligman was responsible for the chapters on customs related to birth and childhood and women's puberty. A.C. Haddon wrote on trade, warfare, magic, religion and the ordering of public life. The team made an effort to cover all aspects of the native way of life. It gave a clear account of the

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conditions of fieldwork and the qualifications of those natives who provided information. For individual scholars, this expedition set on a firm basis the value of fieldwork experience. Two members, **W.H.R. Rivers and C.G. Seligman** carried out more fieldwork on their own. C.G. Seligman worked in Melanesia in 1904. Again in 1909-12 and 1921-22, he conducted fieldwork in Sudan and provided a descriptive account of a cultural and linguistic area. W.H.R. Rivers carried out fieldwork among the **Toda of Nilgiri**, India, in 1901 and among the Vedda of Sri Lanka in 1907-08. The Todas, by Rivers (1906), gave a precise account of fieldwork conditions and its main text described beliefs and customs among the Toda, followed by a separate section on interpretation of the field material.

Another important landmark in collecting ethnographic material was the expedition of A.R. Radcliffe-Brown to the Andaman Islands, India, in 1906-08.

Bronislaw Malinowski, made three field visits to New Guinea. In his first visit to New Guinea, Malinowski lived among the Mailu of Toulon Island, a West Papua-Melanesian group. This visit was made during September 1914 to March 1915. In June 1915 Malinowski went to the Trobriand islands and stayed there until May 1916. Again he went to these islands in October 1917 and lived there for one year.

Malinowski first conversed with the Trobrianders in pidgin-English but soon in a matter of three months, he could make his inquiries in the native dialect. Of the two years of fieldwork among the Trobriand islanders, he spent only six weeks in the company of Europeans. He had pitched his tent right among the huts of the natives. This gave him an ideal position to observe the way of life of the Trobrianders. His story of the 'tribulations' of fieldwork is quoted as 'one of the most human documents in ethnographical writing'

Furthermore, Malinowski was not just a passive observer and collector of facts about a society. He collected them by employing certain techniques. He was the first professionally trained anthropologist to conduct fieldwork in a primitive community. He evolved a range of techniques of fieldwork.

Malinowski suggested that individuals have **physiological needs** (reproduction, food, shelter) and that social institutions exist to meet these needs. There are also culturally derived needs (economics, social control, education, and political organization), that require institutional devices. Each institution has personnel, a charter, a set of norms or rules, activities, material apparatus (technology), and a function. Malinowski argued that **uniform psychological responses are correlates of physiological needs.** He argued that **satisfaction of these needs transformed the cultural instrumental activity into an acquired drive through psychological reinforcement.**

He assumes that **"in every civilisation every custom, material object, ideas and belief fulfils some vital function, has some task to accomplish, represents an indispensable fact within a working whole."**

Malinowski's starting point is the individual, who has a set of 'basic' (or 'biological') needs that must be satisfied for its survival. As stated in Malinowski's text *The Scientific Theory of Culture and Other Essays***:**

1. Culture is essentially an **instrumental apparatus by which man is put in a position to better cope with the concrete, specific problems** that face him in his environment in the course of the satisfaction of his needs.

2. It is a system of objects, activities, and attitudes in which **every part exists as a means to an end.**

3. It is an integral whole in which the various **elements are interdependent**.

4. Such activities, attitudes and objects are organized around important and vital tasks into institutions such as family, the clan, the local community, the tribe, and the organized teams of economic cooperation, political, legal, and educational activity.

5. From the dynamic point of view, that is, as regards the type of activity, culture can be analyzed into a number of aspects such as education, social control, economics, systems of knowledge, belief, and morality, and also modes of creative and artistic expression" (1944:150).

The functional view of culture lays down the principle that in every type of civilization, every custom, material object, idea and belief fulfils some vital function, has some task to accomplish, represents an indispensable part within a working whole.

Malinowski Theory of Needs:

Malinowski developed a clear-cut theory of need in his book **Scientific Theory of Culture and Other Essays.** In this book he defines **need as the system of conditions in human organism, in the cultural setting and in relation of both to the natural environment, which need to be to satisfied for survival of group.** According to functional approach of culture, institutions of a culture operate to satisfy the needs of individual and that of a society as a whole.

In this book he distinguishes three levels of needs which are as follows:

1. Primary or basic or biological need
2. Instrumental need or derived need
3. Integrative need

Malinowski proposes that these three levels constitute a hierarchy. At the bottom is placed the biological system, followed next by the instrumental, and finally, by the integrative. The way in which needs at one level are fulfilled will affect the way in which they will be fulfilled at the subsequent levels.

The most basic needs are the biological, but this doesn't mean one is more important than others. Culture is the kernel of Malinowski's approach. It is 'uniquely human', for it is not found to exist among sub-humans. Comprising all those things – material and non-material – that human beings have created right from the time they separated from their simian ancestors, culture has been the instrument that satisfies the biological needs of human beings. It is a need-serving and need-fulfilling system. Because of this role of culture in satisfying biological needs that Malinowski's functionalism is also known as **'bio-cultural functionalism**

Malinowski set of seven biological needs and their respective cultural responses

Basic needs	Cultural response
1 Metabolism	Commissariat
2 Reproduction	Kinship
3 Bodily comfort	Shelter
4 Safety	Protection

5. Movement	Activities
6. Growth	Training
7. Health	Hygiene

Derived Needs

The human being's life as a social creature brings about a 'secondary determinism'. Malinowski defines it in terms of 'derived needs'. Derived needs relate to the requirement of maintenance of cultural apparatus, regulation of human behaviour, socialisation, and exercise of authority. The responses to them comprise those of economics, social control, educational and political organisation.

Derived Needs	Cultural Response
1. The cultural apparatus of implements and consumer's goods must be produced, used and maintained	Economics
2. Human behaviour must be codified, regulated in action and sanction	Social Control
3. The human knowledge by which every institution is maintained must be transferred to next generation	Education
4. Authority within each institution must be defined, equipped with powers, and endowed with means of forceful execution of its orders	Political Organization

Integrative Needs

To the sphere of integrative needs, belong the phenomena subsumed under such term as tradition, religion, mythology, art, magic etc. Contrary to evolutionary views on evolution of science, religion and magic, Malinowski proposed a functional approach to study them. He opined that they are the highest and most derived imperative of human culture. They are the third order of imperatives or needs.

For him, magic, myth, religion, and art take their places along side of rational knowledge(science) as the foundation of culture. Thus they are instrumental in existence of individual, man and society.

Of all living beings, man is the only animal, who can accumulate experiences, reflect on them, and use them to foretell the future. Science, the system of knowledge, organises and integrates human activities, so that the present and future can be made to better serve the needs of men, on the basis of past experiences. As man's knowledge is insufficient and subject of accumulation in each generation, the **gaps between knowledge and power creates anxiety and hesitatio**n in him and he uses magic. Magic is employed as substitute for rational system, which gives him courage to act evn without perfect knowledge.

Myth enhances social tradition by endowing it with awesome and glorified beginning and thus, promotes, sustains and integrates appropriate social behaviour. Religion promotes individual security and social cohesion by sanctifying human life and social contracts of cooperative existence.

For Malinowski art satisfies the craving of humans for sensual pleasure.


Malinowski's Essay on Baloma

This is an excerpt from Malinowski's essay on Baloma:
The Spirit of the dead in the Trobriand (1948:191-3). Malinowski spent about ten months at Omarakana and the neighbouring village of Kiriwina (Trobriand Islands). There he lived among the natives in a tent and within five months of his stay in the village he was able to converse in Kiriwinian language. This excerpt shows the role of magic in the tribal life of the Kiriwinians. Note Malinowski's ease in bringing the Trobrianders right before our eyes.

Magic is so widespread that, living among the natives, I used to come across magical performances, very often quite unexpectedly, apart from the cases where I arranged to be present at a ceremony. The hut of Bagido'u, the garden magician of Omarakana, was not fifty meters from my tent, and I remember hearing his chant on one of the very first days after my arrival, when I hardly knew of the existence of garden magic. Later on I was allowed to assist at his chanting over magical herbs; in tact, I could enjoy the privilege as often as I liked, and I used it several times. In many garden ceremonies part of the ingredients are chanted over in the village, in the magician's own house, and, again, before being used in the garden. On the morning of such a day the magician goes alone into the bush, sometimes far away, to fetch the necessary herbs. In one charm as many as ten varieties of ingredients, practically herbs have to be brought. Some are to be found on the sea beach only, some must be fetched from the raiboag (the stony coral woodland),others are brought from the odila, the low scrub. The magician has to set out before daybreak and obtain all his material before the sun is up. The herbs remain in the house, and somewhere about noon he proceeds to chant over them a mat is spread on the bedstead, and on this mat another is laid. The herbs are placed on one half of the second mat, the other half being folded over them. Into this opening the magician chants his spell.

Malinowski illustrated his functional scheme with **charter of an institution**. He defined charter of an institution as the system of values for the pursuit of which human beings enter into any organisation already existing. He defined personnel of an institution as the group organised on different principles of authority, division of functions and distribution of privileges and duties. The rules or norms of institutions are technical acquired skills, habits, legal norms, ethical commands, which are accepted by members or imposed upon them.

The first aim of every society, according to Malinowski is survival. Thus, according to the charter, in every society, there are personnel who have norms or set of values. These norms and values inspire personnel for material apparatus, which creates activities, and activities ultimately lead a function. This may be shown in diagram below:
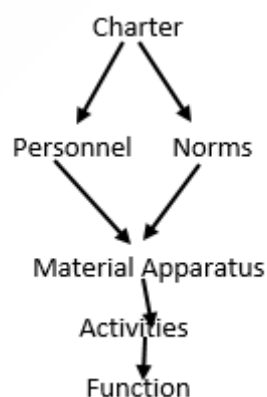
Malinowski Contribution on Economic Anthropology:

Economic anthropology studies how human societies provide the material goods and services that make life possible. In the course of material provisioning and during the realization of final consumption, people relate to each other in ways that convey power and meaning.

Malinowski proposed following points on economic organization of simple societies:

1. The assumption of primitive man as being purely rational, utilitarian, and logical in his economic affairs, was a grave error. Social convention, social restriction and principle of social structure dictate much savage economic behaviour.
2. Among Australian aborigines there was economic organization. Hence no pre-economic stage was likely among many modern primitive peoples.
3. Contrary to common view, savages had highly organized and systematic form of labour.
4. Trade and exchange among primitive communities were no longer rudimentary but could be regular, elaborate, and complex.

Malinowski's work dealing with subject matter of Economic Anthropology are:

Kula: The Circulating Exchange of Valuables in the Archipelago of eastern New Guinea; Argonauts of Western Pacific. Twice each year, Trobriand islanders launch their canoes and visit other islands, carrying gifts and local specialities for barter. When they arrive, the travellers give gifts, barter, and are feasted by their hosts. These are not simple trading expeditions since the islanders aim to acquire, from special kula-exchange partners, armlets of white shells (mwali) and necklaces of red shells (souvlava). Kula shells are carried from one island to another in a ring, the armlets in one direction and the necklaces in another, in a constant cycle of exchange called 'kula'.

Kula items have no monetary value and cannot be converted into consumer goods. They are merely for display and prestige, similar to the English crown jewels according to Malinowski, or to a sports trophy held only until the next encounter. The shells are highly esteemed by men who seek them from their lifetime partners in exchange, hence the local saying 'Once in kula, always in kula'. Every man in the kula cycle receives all of the kula articles at some point. He keeps them for a while and then passes them on. The shells are formally transferred and no haggling is allowed. The time-lapse between the gift and counter-gift is an expression of confidence, on the part of the giver, that the partner will return his due. Men perform magic to ensure goodwill and affection so that shells will be returned, since a man's prestige depends on it.

Malinowski chastised writers who referred to kula shells as money. They are better seen as an exchange of gifts in a moral framework. Thus Malinowski used the kula to make the more general point that the economy is embedded in social relations. The kula ring welds together a large number of islands and their economies. He also stressed the political nature of kula. It provides internal status for men, and strengthens political stability among kula trading islands by reinforcing peace, since Trobrianders are highly reticent to attack islanders who are partners in kula. According to Malinowski, the many interactions which come under the ambit of kula (prestige, political influence, trade, and gift-giving) all form 'one organic whole'. Malinowski's study of kula exchange is thus a major demonstration of the functionalist method in anthropology.

Urigubu system: Trobriand men spend a great deal of time and energy cultivating yams, but local people normally eat other fresh produce, including sweet potatoes, greens beans, squash, fruits, and taro. The yams are mainly used by men as gifts to their married-out daughters and sisters who will display them publically in a special yam house. The obligation to participate in gift-giving is in this

instance dictated by the local kinship system. People in the Trobriands traditionally adhere to matrilineal descent and patrilocal post-marital residence. This means that when a woman gets married to a man, she moves to his village but her husband continues to belong to his mother's lineage. The woman who married him will in turn belong to her own mother's lineage. The gift of yams from a man to his sister or daughter brings the woman prestige and status because it shows how many strong supporters she has from her matrilineal kin. The gift of yams thereby recognises the woman as the actual owner of the matrilineal group. In return, her husband, who will receive some of the yams that she is given, will similarly be obligated to produce and send yams to the house of his married-out sister or daughter who, again, will be living in her husband's matrilineal community.

These interlocking exchange relationships between men and their married-out sisters or daughters do not stop at the exchange of yams. By giving yams to one's sister and thereby to her husband, one obligates one's brother-in-law to give a return gift. This must come in a particular form—bundles of banana leaves given by women. When a man dies in a matrilineal village, all female descendants of this matrilineal lineage who are already married must come back to participate in the funeral as the kinswomen of the deceased. More importantly, they return as the true owners of the matrilineal group. During the funerary ritual, these women give away their special wealth—bundled banana leaves or banana-leaf skirts—to funeral guests. They also mourn the deceased and contribute to the ritual with labour. The woman who gives away the largest number of bundles and skirts is recognised as a 'wealthy woman' (Weiner 1992).

Malinowski's view on the Social Change:

Malinowski was not interested in causality but in utility of institutions. In terms of Functional analysis, one can show that no new invention, no revolution, no social or intellectual change ever occurs except when new needs are created. Thus, culture is not static, but dynamic.

Criticism of Malinowski's Functionalism:

The major objection to Malinowski's functionalism is that it cannot readily account for cultural variation. Most of the needs he identified such as needs of food are universal. All societies must deal with them if they are to survive. Thus while functionalist approach may tell us why all societies engage in food gathering practices, it cannot tell why different societies engage in different food gathering practices. In other words, it doesn't explain why certain specific cultural pattern arose to fulfil a need that might be fulfilled just as easily by any number of alternative possibilities.

He explained how every aspect was serving the needs of individuals. But interests of individuals may be in conflict, what is desirable for one may not be desirable for other.

The theory proposed by Malinowski is ahistorical in nature i.e. it doesn't take into account the past of institution. It is only concerned with the present form of society and not bothered about what led to present form. **(Goldschmidt 1996:511).**

STRUCTURAL FUNCTIONALISM

Structural Functionalism is a theoretical understanding of society that puts **social systems as the collective means to fulfil society's needs (Instead of individual biological needs).** In order for social life to survive and develop in society there are a number of activities that need to be carried out to ensure that certain needs are fulfilled. In the structural functionalist model, individuals produce necessary goods and services in various institutions and roles that correlate with the norms of the society. Thus, one of the key ideas in Structural Functionalism is that society is made-up of groups or institutions, which are cohesive, share common norms, and have a definitive culture. Unlike Malinowski's emphasis on individuals, Radcliffe-Brown considered individuals irrelevant.

Theoretical Influence

Brown was influenced by Emile Durkheim. Durkheim advocated the study of '**social facts**' in a sociological manner. He spoke of studying these facts objectively, without preconceived notions. In his view, society was basically a moral order. The concept of the 'collective conscience' was an important part of his work. Durkheim wanted to develop sociology on the lines of the natural sciences i.e. as an 'objective', rigorous science. All these ideas attracted Radcliffe-Brown. Durkheimian sociology combined with Radcliffe-Brown's admiration for the natural sciences resulted in his ideas about the ideal society of the future.

Durkheim defines social facts as "ways of acting, thinking and feeling, external to the individual, and endowed with a power of coercion by reason of which they control him". To Durkheim society is a reality **suigeneris.** Society comes into being by the association of individuals. Hence society represents a specific reality which has its own characteristics. This unique reality of society is separate from other realities studied by physical or biological sciences.

THE CONCEPT OF SOCIAL STRUCTURE IN RADCLIFFE-BROWN'S WORK

The concept of social structure and its functional features has been described by Radcliffe-Brown in his book **"Structure and Function in Primitive Society" (1952**). According to him the concept of **structure refers to an arrangement of parts related to one another in some sort of larger unity**. For instance, the structure of a house reveals the arrangement of walls, roofs, rooms, passage, windows, etc. In social structure the ultimate components are the arrangements of persons in relation to each other. For instance, in a village arrangements of persons into families are found, which is again a structural feature. For example, in a family, we find mother, brother, sister, uncle, aunt etc.

Elements of Social Structure:

In a social structure, the human beings organise themselves into association and institutions for the pursuit of some objective. The aim can be fulfilled only if the social structure is based upon certain principles. These principles set the elements of social structure in motion, which are as follows:

i) **Normative System**: Normative system presents the society with the ideas and values. The people attach emotional importance to these norms.

ii) **Position System:** Position system refers to status and roles of the individuals. The desires, aspirations and expectations of individuals are varied, multiple and unlimited. So, these can be fulfilled only if the members of society are assigned different roles according to their capabilities and capacities.

iii) **Sanction system**: For the proper enforcement of norms every society has a sanction system. The integration and coordination of different parts of social structure depends upon conformity to social norms. The non-conformists are punished by the society according to nature of non-conformity.

iv) **A system of anticipated response**: The anticipated response system calls upon the individuals to participate in the social system.

v) **Action system:** it is the object or goal to be arrived at by the social structure. The whole social structure revolves around it.

Structural Features of Social Life:

According to A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, the structural features of social life as follows:

1. **Existence of social group**: social structure consists of all kinds of social groups like family, clan, moieties, social sanction, totemic group, social classes, caste group, kinship system etc. The inter relations among these groups constitute the core of the social structural phenomenon.

2. **Internal structure of the group:** these groups have specific internal structure. For example, a family consists with the relations of father, mother and their children.

3. **Arrangement into social classes:** these groups are arranged into social classes and categories. For example, the economic classes in the Western societies and the castes in the Indian societies.

4. **Social Distinctions**: there is social distinction between different classes which is based on sex, economic distinctions, and authority and caste distinctions. For example, in India there is social distinction between the Brahmins and Shudras.

5. **Arrangement of persons in dyadic relationship**: an example of dyadic relationship is person to person relationship like master and servant.

6. **Interaction between groups and persons**: interaction between persons can be seen in social processes involving co-operation, conflict, accommodations etc. while the interaction between groups can be seen while nation goes to war with another nation

Types of Social Structure:

According to Radcliffe-Brown the importance of social institution is that social structure is the arrangement of persons which is controlled and defined by institutions. There are two types of models of studying social structure i.e. **actual social structure** and **general social structure**.

'Actual social structure' according to Brown, the relationship between persons and groups change from time to time. New members come into being through immigration or by birth, while others go out of it by death and migration. Besides this, there are marriages and divorces whereby the members change in several times. Thus, actual social structure remains changes in many times. On the other hand, in general social structure, remain relatively constant for a long time.

For instance, if one visits the village and again visits that particular village after few years i.e. after 10 years later he or she finds that many members of the village have died and others have been enrolled. Now they are 10 years older who survive than the previous visit. Their relations to one another may have changed in many respects; but the general structure remains more or less same and continuing.

Thus Radcliffe-Brown held the view that sometimes the structural form may change gradually or suddenly but even though the sudden changes occur the continuity of structure is maintained to a considerable extent.

Radcliffe-Brown's concept of function

As Radcliffe-Brown (1971: 179) puts it, ".... the life of an organism is conceived as the functioning of its structure. It is through and by the continuity of the functioning that the continuity of the structure is preserved".

The continuity of the social structure is maintained by the process of social life. Social life consists of the activities and interaction of various human beings and of the groups of which they are a part. Social life, in other words refers to the way in which the social structure functions. **The function of any recurrent social activity is the part it plays in maintaining the continuity of the social structure**. For example, marriage is a recurrent social activity. Through marriage, individuals of the opposite sex are brought together and society legitimises their sexual relationship. Children may be born and new members are added to society. Thus, by providing a socially acceptable outlet for sexual relations and providing a legitimate way through which society obtains new members, marriage contributes or performs a function in maintaining social structure.

Function of social usage or activity refers to the contribution it makes to the functioning of the total social system. This implies that the social system has a certain kind of unity, which Radcliffe-Brown terms as 'functional unity'. By this he means a condition in which all the parts of the social system work together in a harmonious, consistent fashion.

For instance, if we take up the example of Indian society in Pre-British India, we may say that the various parts of the social system, e.g. village organisation, caste, joint family etc. worked together in a consistent fashion. They complemented each other and contributed to maintaining the existing social structure.

SOME EXAMPLES OF RADCLIFFE BROWN'S STRUCTURAL FUNCTIONALISM

In his work, the Andaman Islanders, Radcliffe-Brown (1933: 230) writes: "Every custom and belief plays some determinate part in the social life of the community, just as every organ of a living body plays some part in the general life of the organism".

Ceremonial Weeping in the Andaman Islands:

Andamanese ceremonies are marked by formal weeping. Andamanese weep, ceremonially on a number of occasions, e.g. when friends and relatives are reunited after a long separation, after a death, during marriage and initiation ceremonies, peace-making ceremonies and so on. Radcliffe-Brown holds that the purpose underlying all ceremonials is the expression and transmission of sentiments, which help to regulate individual, behaviour in conformity with the needs of society.

Formal weeping, Radcliffe-Brown concludes, takes place in situations in which social relations which have been disturbed or interrupted are about to he resumed. For instance, when long-lost friends meet, ceremonial weeping marks the fact that the long separation is over, and the friendship will resume once more. Similarly, ceremonial weeping at funerals marks the final departure of the deceased. Soon, life will have to go on as usual; the normal relations and activities will be resumed in this manner, ceremonial weeping has definite role or function to play in the life of that society.

Kinship in Primitive Societies

Since the kinship system provided the major organisational principle for most primitive communities, it is imperative to understand its principles. By focussing on this topic, Radcliffe- Brown contributes a great deal in helping students of social anthropology understand the peoples they studied. Radcliffe-Brown is not merely interested in the usages, which shape the relationships between kin, but also in the terms used to denote kin, i.e., kinship terminology. Further, he concentrates on 'classificatory' systems of kinship terminology, wherein kin outside the circle of family are also classified along with members of the family. For example, mother's sister, though outside the circle of the patrilineal family, is nonetheless classified as 'mother', Radcliffe-Brown identifies three basic principles of the classificatory system of kinship terminology.

a) **The unity of the sibling group** — Here, brothers and sisters share a feeling of solidarity and were treated as a unit by outsiders. My mother's sister is also addressed as 'mother', my mother's brother is like a 'male mother'.

b) **The unity of the lineage group** — A lineage refers to the descendants in a line (traced either through male or female) of a single ancestor. Like siblings, lineage members show solidarity and are treated as a single unit by outsiders.

c) **The 'generation principle'** — It is observed that in all kinship systems, there is a certain distance or tension between members of succeeding generations. For example, my mother has to socialise me, hence she will try to discipline or control me.

Radcliffe-Brown saw joking relationships as involving essentially **'permitted disrespect'**. Avoidance relationships, in contrast, involve extreme respect, such that avoiding the relative in question is the most satisfactory way of ensuring that the implicit tensions of the relationship do not result in conflict. Radcliffe-Brown argued that joking and avoidance relations limit conflict and increase social solidarity by directing sentiments in such a way as to control potentially threatening social interaction.

CRITICISM OF RADCLIFF BROWN'S STRUCTURAL FUNCTIONALISM

The structural and functional approach of Radcliffe-Brown' has been subjected to great criticism.

• According to some critics, it is wrong to look at society as a living organism because the structure of the living organism does not change, but the society does.

• This approach treats social order as an integrated whole; a situation sometimes arises where society can be seen in state of imbalance and disequilibrium.

• He emphasized the contribution of phenomena to maintaining social order. However, Radcliffe-Brown's disregard for individual needs was apparent in this analogy.

• The structural functionalist approach cannot explain variation in social structure.

• It is ahistorical in nature i.e. it doesn't explain how a particular institution has achieved the present form.

• This structural functionalism is value biased; that often tries to show if the purpose were kept in arrangement of order. It supports exploitation of women, children, labour and dalits.