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UNIT ONE

INTRODUCING ANTHROPOLOGY AND ITS SUBJECT MATTER

Dear Students!

Welcome to Unit One. This unit deals with the essence of anthropology. In this unit, you will be introduced briefly, to the discipline of anthropology and its fundamental premises and concerns. It also explains the historical development of the discipline, its subject matter and scope, defining features and approaches to culture, society and humanity, in general and why it is important, and how it can change your perspective of the world around you. In due course, students are required to assume active role in class activities and discussions: sharing of experiences, undertaking different debates and arguments and taking home assignments.

Contents of the Unit

The major topics to be treated in this unit include: Definitions of anthropology, a brief overview of its historical development, subject matter and scope of anthropology. It also addresses topics such as the relations of anthropology with other sciences and humanities, and the relevance of the discipline with respect to both its practical application and what it contributes to understanding of human affairs.

Unit learning outcomes

Up on the successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

- define anthropology and explain the main concerns of the discipline;
- understand the historical development of anthropology;
- explain the scope and subject matter of anthropology;
- identify the sub-disciplines of anthropology;

- internalize unique features of anthropology;
- Understand the importance of anthropology's holistic, comparative and relativistic perspectives;
- Describe the similarities and differences between anthropology and other disciplines that also study humans;
- Appraise the relevance and contribution of anthropology in our life.

1.1 Definition, Scope and Subject Matter of Anthropology

Reflect your views on the following questions.

- What do you know about anthropology? How do you define Anthropology?
- How can we define anthropology in more appropriate terms?

The world as we know it has becoming a small place with growing interconnections, and interdependence among peoples and nations across the globe. Global communications, international trade, transfer of technology, rises in international travel, and ease of mobility along with the worldwide spread of consumer culture have brought people and cultures into more intimate contact than ever before (Scupin and DeCorse, 2012). Hence, knowledge about societies and cultures other than one's own, and greater global awareness become essential for students and others, preparing to take their place in an ever more complex world of the twenty-first century. The discipline of anthropology is ideally suited to introduce students to a global perspective and the broad world of humanity.

Anthropology has amassed an impressive body of knowledge about the human condition. Its focus on diversity, and immense capacity to enlighten and inform about human similarities and differences helps students understand and interact with their fellow human beings in an increasingly interconnected, and yet, greatly diverse world (Kottak, 2007). Through exploring the intriguing variability of the world's diverse peoples, anthropology provides students with the full range of the human condition. It

offers a broader view, a distinctive cross-cultural perspective, which helps students acquire skills crucial for living and working in the twenty-first century.

Before we go any further and look at its fascinating subject matter, however, let's first define and outline what anthropology is.

1.1.1 Defining Anthropology

The word anthropology is derived from the Greek words, '*anthropos*', meaning 'human beings' or 'humankind' and '*logia*', which can be translated as 'the study of' or 'knowledge of'. So, we can define anthropology, as the *systematic study of humankind* (Scupin and DeCorse, 2012). In one hand, this is an accurate description of the field to the extent that anthropology raises a wide variety of questions about the human condition. On the other hand, however, this definition in itself does not distinguish anthropology from other disciplines which study people, in one way or another. Thus, we need to define anthropology in more appropriate and revealing terms.

Anthropology is the scientific study of human beings as social organisms, interacting with each other in their environment. It can be defined as the study of human nature, human society, and their behavior; their interactions with each other, and with the material environment (Srange, 2009). It is important to note that we humans have two essential characteristics -biological and cultural; where our interaction and adaptation with the material environment involves interplay between culture and biology (Kottak, 2007). It is crucial to consider both the biological and cultural characteristics, when dealing with humanity.

In this regard, anthropology study humans, both biologically and culturally, in whatever form, time period, or region of the world they might be found (Andreatta and Ferraro, 2010). It is the systematic exploration of human biological and cultural diversity, across time and space. It should further be noted that the discipline is interested in the origin, and development of humans and their contemporary variations, across the world.

Anthropology can also be outlined as a science which:

- investigates the strategies for living that are learned and shared by people as members of human social groups;
- examines the characteristics that human beings share as members of one species (homo sapiens) and the diverse ways that people live in different environments;
- analyses the products of social groups: material cultures and non-material creations (religion/beliefs, social values, institutions, practices, etc.).

In more appropriate terms, we can define anthropology as the holistic and comparative study of humanity (Kottak, 2007). It explores human biology, society, and culture and considers their interrelations. Whatever definition of anthropology one chooses, stated Peacock (2002), it should stress that this is a discipline for understanding humankind in its many facets, holistically. It also compares aspects of different societies, and continuously searches for interesting dimensions for comparison (Eriksen, 2001).

In effect, anthropology tries to understand and represent the realities of particular cultural and sub-cultural worldviews, encapsulating their key features and underlying principles, comparing cross-culturally, in order to make sense of human behavior (Srange, 2009). Anthropologists share the assumption that sound conclusions about 'human nature' cannot be drawn from a single nation, society, or cultural tradition (Peacock, 2002).

To illustrate this point, for instance, let's consider gender differences: *Do male and female capacities, attitudes, and behavior reflect biological or cultural variation*? *Are there universal emotional and intellectual contrasts between the sexes*? *Are females less aggressive than males? Is male dominance a human universal*? By examining diverse societies, stated Conrad (2007), anthropology shows that many contrasts between men and women arise from cultural learning rather than from biology.

Anthropology tries to achieve an understanding of culture, society and humanity through detailed and comparative study of group life. It seeks to explain how and why people are both similar and different through examination of our biological and cultural past and comparative study of contemporary human societies (Howard and Dunaif-Hattis, 1992). As such anthropology can be considered as a great

encyclopedic discipline; which tends to provoke, challenge, stimulate, and occasionally, critique students by exposing them to the extraordinary diversity of humanity (Spencer and Barnard, 2002).

The major goals of anthropology's investigation of humanity are to understand the uniqueness and diversity of human behavior, and human societies around the world and to discover the fundamental similarities that link humanity throughout time (Scupin and DeCorse, 2012). The goal encompasses an infinite number of questions about all aspects of human existence.

In fact, as it was described by the anthropologist, Tim Ingold (2003), "*anthropology is philosophy with people in*". At the deepest level, it raises philosophical and scientific questions about humanity that it tries to respond to by exploring human lives under different conditions. It questions, for instance: *What is meant to be human? How and why do human groups differ, both biologically and culturally? How are people who live in industrialized, urbanized nations different from so called "traditional" societies? What are the social and cultural implications of living on a planet whose diverse peoples are now connected than ever before by the process of globalization? How globalization is affecting cultural diversity, language, family life, inequality among nations, the production of art, and development*?.

Using its goals as a springboard, anthropology has forged distinctive objectives and propelled research that has broadened our understanding of humanity, from the beginnings of human societies to the present (Kottak, 2007). Thus, anthropology can be generally defined as a broad scientific discipline dedicated to the comparative study of humans as a group, from its first appearance on earth to its present stage of development. We can state without a doubt that of all the disciplines that study humans, anthropology is by far the broadest in scope.

As a matter of simplicity and brevity, anthropology primarily offers **two kinds of insight**. **First**, *the discipline produces knowledge about the actual biological and cultural variations in the world*; **second**, *anthropology offers methods and theoretical perspectives* enabling the practitioner to explore, compare, understand and solve these varied expressions of the human condition (Bailey and Peoples, 2012). As Peacock (2002), put it, anthropology's theories are a 'lens' that helps to bring human

life into focus. They are a set of useful 'idea tools' that help us to open up what is often regarded as the 'black box' of human behaviour (Srange, 2009).

1.1.2 A Brief History of Anthropology

Like the other social sciences and humanities, anthropology is a fairly recent discipline. Though it was given its present shape, during the twentieth century, anthropology has important forerunners in the historiography, geography, travel writing, philosophy and jurisprudence of earlier times (Erikson, 2001). Despite the complexity, tracking the evolution and development of the discipline, we can state beyond doubt that anthropology, considered as the science of humanity, originated in the region we commonly, but inaccurately call 'the West'; notably in four 'Western' countries: France, Great Britain, the USA and, Germany (Ingold, 2003).

The present academic anthropology has its roots in the works and ideas of the great ancient and medieval philosophers and social thinkers. These thinkers were interested in the nature, origin and destiny of man, variation and cultural diversity, and the morality and ethics of human relationships (ibid, 2003). Hence, from a 'history of ideas' point of view, the writings of ancient Greek philosophers and travelers, medieval Arab historians, medieval and renaissance European travelers, and later European philosophers and social thinkers, are all plausible precursors of anthropology (Barnard, 2004).

To illustrate, the historian, Herodotus (5^{th}c BC), sought to understand other people and cultures by travelling far, and wide and wrote detailed accounts of 'other' peoples, comparing their customs and beliefs to those of Athens (Erikson, 2001). In his narratives, a problem of how we should relate to the 'Others' that has followed anthropology today were noted. The group of philosophers, known as Sophists (of Athens), who considered as the first philosophical relativists in the European tradition, used to argue that there can be 'no absolute truth' as many of the 20^{th} century anthropologists did (ibid, 2001). It is a relativist view that truth will always vary with experience and what we would today call culture. But, their narratives and arguments about differing cultural values fell short of being scientific; mainly, because Herodotus lacked theory while the Sophists lacked empirical evidence.

The greatest historian and social philosopher of the middle age, Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406), who provides massive history of the Arabs and Berbers, were also worth mentioning, here. Khaldun's main achievement lies in his non-religious, theoretical framework, where he stresses differing forms of social cohesion (kinship and religion) as a key variable in accounting for historical change and the rise of new groups to power (Barnard, 2004). His theories were anticipated Émile Durkheim's ideas about social solidarity, which may considered a cornerstone of sociology and anthropology.

In Europe, scholarly interest in cultural variation and human nature re-emerged in the later years, as a consequence of the new intellectual freedom of the Renaissance and, perhaps even more importantly, increasing European explorations and conquests of distant lands (Ingold, 1986). Illustrious intellectuals such as Michel de Montaigne (16thc), Thomas Hobbes (17thc) and Giambattista Vico (18thc), were among the first European thinkers, who tried to account for cultural variability and global cultural history (Erikson, 2001).

In spite of these deep-going historical continuities, anthropology as a science only appeared at a later stage. The discipline is a product, not merely of a series of singular thoughts such as those we have mentioned above; but of wide ranging changes in European culture and society, that in time would lead to the formation of capitalism, individualism, secularized science, patriotic nationalism and extreme cultural reflexivity.

By the end of the 18th century, several of the theoretical questions that still raised by anthropologists had already been defined: ***universalism*** versus ***relativism*** (*what is common to humanity; what is culturally specific*), ***ethnocentrism*** versus ***cultural relativism*** (*moral judgements versus neutral descriptions of other peoples*), and ***culture*** versus ***nature*** (Barnard, 2004).

Generally speaking, though the seeds were sown in early modern philosophy, and important advances were made in the 18th century, it was only during the 19th century that anthropology was born as an academic discipline, out of the intellectual atmosphere of **Enlightenment**, (*which is the 18th century social and philosophical movement*) that emphasized human progress and the poser of reason, and based on the Darwinian theory of evolution (Ingold, 2003).

It should be noted here, that in the early years of anthropology, *Darwinism* had a strong impact in the discipline. The prevailing view was that culture generally develops (or evolves) in a uniform and progressive manner, just as Darwin argued species did (Ingold, 1986). It was thought that most societies pass through the same series of stages, to arrive ultimately at a common end, where European societies were thought to be the end product of a long developmental chain.

By the late 1870s, anthropology was beginning to emerge as a profession. A major impetus for its growth was the expansion of western colonial powers and their consequent desire to better understand the peoples living under colonial domination (Ingold, 2003). It can be said, thus, by the 19th century, anthropology had developed into the primary discipline and science for understanding non-Western societies and cultures (Scupin and DeCorse, 2012).

Anthropologists of the early 1900s emphasized the study of social and cultural differences among human groups. Here, many of the peoples of non-western world and their social and cultural features were studied in detail and documented (Kottak, 2007). This approach is called **ethnography**. In relation to this, it is common to observe people associating anthropologists to the study of non-industrial societies, and they do. However, anthropology is much more than the study of non-industrial peoples (Eriksen, 2001). It is a uniquely holistic discipline with a global focus (*this will be detailed in the next sub-section*).

By the mid-1900, anthropologists attempted to discover universal human patterns and the common bio-psychological traits that bind all human beings (Kottak, 2007). This approach is called **ethnology**. Ethnology aims at the comparative understanding and analysis of different human groups across time and space.

Important intellectual developments outside anthropology in the second half of the 19th century such as the Darwin's *theory of natural selection* (1859) and the emergence of classic sociological theory in the works of Comte, Marx and Tönnies, and later Durkheim, also had a powerful impact on the development of the field (Barnard, 2004).

In spite of the philosophical and scholarly efforts of the preceding centuries and other theoretical developments, and methodological refinements, however, it was during

the 20th century that anthropology attained its present shape (Eriksen, 2001). Its emergence as the discipline known today, is associated with four outstanding scholars, working in three countries, in the early decades of the 20th century: *Franz Boas (1858-1942) in the USA; A.R. Radcliffe-Brown (1881-1955), and Bronislaw Malinowski (1884-1942), in the UK; and Marcel Mauss (1872-1950) in France* (Barnard, 2004). They may considered as the founding fathers of anthropology. Between them, they effected a near-total renovation of three of the four anthropology's national traditions -the American, the British and the French.

In Ethiopia, professional anthropologists have been studying culture and society on a more intensive level only since the late 1950s. Almost inevitably, the initial emphasis was on ethnography, the description of specific customs, cultures and ways of life.

1.1.3 Subject Matter and Scope of Anthropology

Reflect your views on the following questions.

- What is the subject matter and concerns of anthropology?
- What is the temporal and spatial scope of anthropology?
- How does anthropology bridge both the sciences and humanities?

The scope and subject matter of anthropology is very vast and broad; as there is no time and space left as far as man exist. In other words, the temporal dimension covers the full length of human history and prehistory, spanning millions of years, the present and even the future. In terms of the spatial dimension, anthropology encompasses the globe, excluding no space or group (Peacock, 2002).

As it was described by Eriksen (2001), anthropology studies all parts of the world, and will bring the reader from the tropical rainforests of the Amazon to the cold semi-desert of the Arctic; from the skyscrapers of Manhattan to mud huts in the Sahel; from the deserts of the Middle East to the urban areas of China; from villages in the Southern Ethiopia to African cities. In terms of aspects, the discipline covers an extremely broad range that includes the biological as well as the cultural, the

economic and social, the aesthetic and political (Peacock, 2002). The discipline touches all aspects of human condition. Wherever human beings live, there is always anthropology.

Depicting the subject matter and scope of the field, one of the prominent anthropologist of the twentieth century, Claude Lévi-Strauss, has stated that "*anthropology has humanity as its object of research, but unlike the other human sciences, it tries to grasp its object through its most diverse manifestations*" (1983: 49). Anthropology studies humanity in terms of its varied characteristics, dimensions and all aspects of conditions. The discipline covers all aspects of human ways of life, experiences and existence, as humans live in a social group.

With its broad interest on humanity, anthropology combines four major sub-disciplines that bridge the sciences and the humanities, and transcends the conventional boundaries of both while addressing questions to the distant past and the pressing present; perhaps with implications for the future (Peacock, 2002). Noting the interconnection between the sciences and humanities within anthropology, another prominent anthropologist, Eric Wolf (1964), asserted that "a*nthropology is both the most scientific of the humanities and the most humanistic of the sciences"* (1964:88). The humanistic perspective provides insight into the specifics of human behavior within different cultures, whereas the scientific approach offers a method to test causal explanations that allow for insight into universal aspects of human behavior (Scupin and DeCorse, 2012).

The four sub-disciplines of anthropology -*socio-cultural anthropology, physical anthropology, archeology and linguistics anthropology,* constitute a broad approach to the study of humanity, both past and present. Together they yield a comprehensive understanding of humanity. Insights from all of them are woven together to reveal the holistic fabric of a particular, society or the threads, uniting all of humanity (Srange, 2009). Discussions of these sub-disciplines will be presented in unit two.

As the most humanistic of academic fields, human diversity is one of the main subject matter of anthropology (Kottak, 2007). Anthropologists listen to, record, and

represent voices from a multitude of nations and cultures. In due consideration of its emphasis on the diversity of human societies, and cultural patterns and the similarities that make all humans fundamentally alike, Kluckhohn (1944), called anthropology, "*the science of human similarities and differences"* (1944:9). The discipline not only tries to account for the social and cultural variations in the world, but a crucial part of the anthropological project also consists in conceptualizing and understanding similarities between social systems and human relationships.

To achieve these two goals, anthropologists pay as much attention to universal human characteristics as they do to local cultural contexts and conditions. They try to find out what factors account for the similarities in certain beliefs, practices and institutions that are found across cultures while they grapple with explaining why cultural universals exist. Indeed, claimed, Eriksen (2001), this is what anthropology is about: to discover both the uniqueness of each social and cultural setting and the ways in which humanity is one.

Bound neither by time nor by space, anthropology attempts to answer major questions of human nature and existence. Among others, uncovering the meaning, nature, origin, and destiny of humanity is one of the key concerns of anthropology. It is interested in some of the following questions and issues about humans:

- *What makes us human? what is the essence of human existence?*
- *When, where, and how did the human species originated and why we evolved into what we are today?*
- *What are we now and where are we going?*
- *How did we (the human species) arrive at the present stage of biological, intellectual, and cultural development?*
- *Do all people share a common human nature? If so, what is it like?*
- *How do we understand the diversity of human thought, action, and sociality across cultures? how can we explain why cultures vary?*
- *How have changes in culture and society influenced and been influenced by biological change?*
- *In what ways do humans who live in various times and places, differ irrespective of their commonality?*

These are a few of the questions and concerns investigated by anthropology, the academic discipline that studies all of humanity (Kottak, 2007).

The discipline also accounts for the interrelationships between different aspects of human existence. Perhaps one of the most striking quality of anthropology, argues Tim Ingold (2003), is its commitment to holism; the perspective that stress the importance of establishing interconnections between the different aspects of human existence -the biological, social, historical and cultural dimensions of human life (Ingold, 2003).

Usually anthropologists investigate these interrelationships taking as their point of departure a detailed study of group life in a particular society. One may, therefore, can say that anthropology asks large questions, while, at the same time, it draws its most important insights from small places (Eriksen, 2001). Although anthropologists have wide-ranging and frequently highly specialized interests, they all share a common concern in trying to understand both connections within societies and connections between societies.

Such focus areas of investigation and the stated aims of the discipline convey that the areas covered by anthropology are diverse and enormous. Anthropologists strive for an understanding of the biological and cultural origins and evolutionary development of the species. They are concerned with all humans, both past and present, as well as their behavior patterns, thought systems, and material possessions (Andreatta and Ferraro, 2010).

Whether one is interested in the study of religion, multiculturalism, ethnicity and nationalism, globalization and multi-locality, identity, power relations, feminism, economic life or in understanding of why and in which sense the Azande of Central Africa believe in witches, why there is greater social inequality in Brazil than in Sweden, why some New Guinea peoples ceremonially engorge themselves with pork, the same animal flesh that some Middle Eastern religions hold to be unclean, how the inhabitants of Mauritius avoid violent ethnic conflict, how peoples in Ethiopia is responding to globalization, one may turn to anthropology for inspiration and knowledge (Eriksen, 2001).

Anthropologists of one kind or another are likely to investigate almost everything about human beings: our physical variations, cuisines, values, art styles, behaviors, cultural heritage, languages, and so forth. In short, anthropology is a scholarly discipline that aims to describe, in the broadest possible sense, what it means to be human (Peacock, 1986).

1.2 Unique Features of Anthropology

Reflect your views on the following question.

- What is unique about anthropology as compared with other disciplines?
- What are the main distinguishing features of anthropology?

There are several distinguishing characteristics that differentiate anthropology from other disciplines. Among others, anthropology is unique in its scope, approach, focus and method of study.

- **Broad Scope**

Perhaps the most distinguishing characteristic of anthropology, the one feature that makes it different from other fields that also include people as their subject matter is its broad scope (Bailey and Peoples, 2012). It is interested in all human beings, whether contemporary or past; wherever they may be found, from East African pastoralists to Korean factory workers. It is interested in many different aspects of human experience including phenotypic characteristics, family structures, political systems, relations with the physical environment, economic lives, belief systems, life philosophy, group behaviour, and language, space usage and art (Andreatta and Ferraro, 2010).

No people, place or time is too remote to escape the anthropologist's notice. No dimension of human kind, from genetic makeup to art styles, is outside the anthropologist’s attention (Bailey and Peoples, 2012). Indeed, Anthropology is the broad study of human kind, around the world and throughout time.

- **Unique Approaches**

The main difference between anthropology and other disciplines is not so much of the *kinds of subjects* it examine as the *approaches* it takes to studying human life (Bailey and Peoples, 2012). In its approach, anthropology is *holistic*, *relativistic*, and *comparative* that it follows these unique approaches and perspectives as a guiding principle in studying human life.

i. **Holistic Approach**: is an approach in anthropology that it attempt to study a culture or society by looking at all parts of the system and how those parts are interrelated (Andreatta and Ferraro, 2010). The approach assumes that no single aspect of a culture or society can be understood unless its relationships to other aspects of the system are explored. It involves placing whatever behaviour that anthropology is examining within its social and environmental context, and considering the range of cultural beliefs and practices that direct people's activities (Srange, 2009). In other words, the approach looks for *connections* and *interrelationships*, and tries to understand *parts* in the context of the *whole*.

   Accordingly, in its holistic approach, anthropology considers culture, history, language and biology essential to a complete understanding of society (Kottak, 2007). Underscoring the importance of anthropology's holism, Ingold (2003), asserts that a synthesis of our knowledge of the conditions of human life in the world, in all its aspects, is something worth striving for, and that working towards such a synthesis is the essence of doing anthropology (Ingold, 2003).

ii. **Relativistic Approach**: this approach is highly appreciated in anthropological studies. It inculcates the notion that any part of a culture such as an idea, a thing, or a behavior pattern must be viewed in its proper cultural context rather than from the viewpoint of other cultures (Bailey and Peoples, 2012). Hence, anthropology tries to study and explain a certain belief, practice or institution or a group of people in its own context. It does not make value judgment, i.e., it does not hold the position that a given belief or practice is "good" or "bad".

   The approach assumes that societies or cultures have their own unique inner logic, and that it is therefore, scientifically irrational to rank them on a scale

(Peacock, 2002). If one, for instance, places the Nuer, say, at the bottom of a ladder, where the variables are, say, literacy and annual income, this ladder is irrelevant to them if it turns out that the Nuer do not place a high priority on money and books.

In addition, anthropology's relativistic approach rejects the notion that any culture, including our own, possesses a set of absolute standards by which all other cultures can be judged (Andreatta and Ferraro, 2010). It is a cognitive tool that helps anthropologists understands why people think and act the way they do. But, it should be noted that relativism does not logically imply that there is no difference between right and wrong.

iii. **Comparative Approach**: anthropology is a comparative science that offers a unique, cross-cultural perspective; constantly comparing the customs of one society with those of others (Kottak, 2007). It helps to understand differences and similarities among human beings across time and place. Any general theories or ideas about human nature, religious beliefs, social values, family relationships, and social practices and others must take into account information from a wide range of societies (Bailey and Peoples, 2012).

People usually mistakenly think the customs and beliefs familiar to them exist among people everywhere; which is usually not the case. Cross-cultural research in anthropology demonstrates that culturally constituted knowledge such as notions about how food should be prepared, what constitutes 'appropriate' behavior, and what the appropriate social and cultural roles are for men and women is not as general as we might think (Kottak, 2007). Anthropologists believe the cultural ideas and practices of people living in different times and places are far too diverse for any general theory to be accepted until it has been investigated and tested in a wide range of human groups. They compare different social and cultural groups and, by examining their differences and similarities, they able to tackle broader questions about human beings and the patterns of behaviour that they share (Srange, 2009). Thus, general theoretical ideas or assumptions about human societies or cultures must be investigated from a comparative perspective.

- **Emphasis on Insider Perspective**

Another important feature that distinguishes anthropology from other disciplines is its emphasis on the perspective of an insider, when examining other culture. In its approach to culture and society, anthropology has made a distinction between the ***emic*** perspective and the ***etic*** perspective. The former refers to an insider view, which seeks to describe culture or social behaviour in terms of the categories, concepts, and perceptions of the people being studied. By contrast, the later refers to an outsider view, in which anthropologists use their own categories and concepts to describe the culture under analysis (Andreatta and Ferraro, 2010).

Noting that human behavior stems from the way people perceive and classify the world around them, anthropology considers **insiders**' **views** as a primary focus of anthropological inquiry of culture and social behavior (Peacock, 2002). Anthropological studies give attention to how people perceive themselves and understand their world; how a particular group of people explain about their action, or give meaning to their behaviour or cultural practices. The perspective helps to understand the logic and justification behind group behavior and cultural practices.

- **Method of Research**

Another important unique feature of anthropology is its **research** approach. Anthropology is highly dependent on qualitative research to understand the **meaning** behind any human activity (Bailey and Peoples, 2012). It is largely **qualitative,** recognizing that most of human behavior, people lives, culture and social practices are not readily measurable. It aims to be 'in-depth', getting under the surface of social life to make its underlying dynamics visible (Srange, 2009). It engages fully with the complexities of human 'being'.

Ethnographic fieldwork, participant observation, in-depth and key informant interviews and focus-group discussion are qualitative research instruments to explore change and continuities in human societies (Kottak, 2007). **Ethnographic fieldwork** is the hallmarks of anthropology and it is a way of seeing under the surface of a given social and cultural world (Srange, 2009). Normally it consist extended fieldwork in a particular social setting and document realities occurring

across time. Ethnography involves a thorough close-up study of a particular social and cultural environment, where a researcher is normally required to spend a year or more (Eriksen, 2001). For most anthropologists, fieldwork is a process requiring them to '***tune-in; hangout; and hang-on'*** to the societies and cultures they are interested to study.

Apart from these, a focus more on the local than the macro-social processes has been another exclusive approach in the discipline. Paying great attention to local or micro-social processes certainly helps us to better understand big changes in societies. A detailed account of an event or a phenomenon discovers multiple realities in a community.

1.3 Misconceptions about Anthropology

Reflect your views on the following question.

- What did you hear or read about anthropology, anthropologists and the work they do?

Due to **lack of appropriate awareness** about the nature, scope and subject matter of the discipline, different misconceptions are held about anthropology. The common misconception, in this regard is related to the **area of its study**. People usually misconceived anthropology either as the *study of "primitive" societies* or *limited to the study of rural areas and rural people* (Zerihun, 2005). Though anthropology is initially emerged as a western discipline for the study of non-western societies; it is wrong to conceive the discipline as such; limiting its scope to rural areas or to the study of so called "primitive" societies.

Anthropology is a complex, wide-ranging, and ever changing field (Spencer and Barnard, 2002). It studies not only rural areas and rural people, but urban areas and urban life. As a matter of fact, there is a distinct sub-discipline devoted to the study of urban societies called ***Urban Anthropology***, which focuses on urban areas and people's life in complex cities. Practically, any social system can be studied anthropologically and contemporary anthropological research displays an enormous

range, empirically as well as thematically (Peacock, 2002). It should be clear that anthropology is interested in all human beings/groups and in all things human.

It is also wrongly misconceived that anthropology is the study/analysis of fossil remains of the proto-humans species like that of '***Lucy/Dinkinesh***' (Zerihun, 2005). It is true that anthropology is interested in the question of the origin of modern human beings and examines human evolution. However, this does not mean that anthropology is all about the study of human evolution. It studies both the biological and the cultural aspects of humans and examines the existing human physical and biological variations and cultural diversity (Kottak, 2007).

It is also misconceived that the purpose of anthropology is to study in order to keep and preserve communities far from development and obsolete cultural practices in museums. Rather, anthropologists' duties are to support those communities' capacity to empower themselves in development processes. They assist peoples' initiatives instead of imposed policies and ideas coming from outside and play active roles in bringing about positive change and development in their own lives.

1.4 The Relationship between Anthropology and Other Disciplines

Reflect your views on the following question.

- *What do you think is the relationship between anthropology and other sciences and humanities?*
- *What common characteristics does anthropology share with the other sciences and humanities?*
- *What distinguishes anthropology from other sciences and humanities?*

Due to its broad interest on humanity, anthropology cut across with other sciences and humanities. In terms of subject matter and areas of study, it greatly overlaps with other disciplines in the humanities, the social sciences, and the physical sciences, which in one way or another deal with people and study certain aspects of human society (Andreatta and Ferraro, 2010).

In other words, anthropology encompass many of the subjects that disciplines like history, sociology, political sciences, economics, linguistics, philosophy and others consider their exclusive subject area including the human past, human social life and patterns of social relationships, systems of governance, law, material life and means of making a living, religion, language, and forms of creative expression including art, narratives, music, and dance (Bailey and Peoples, 2012).

In addition, because of the magnitude of examining all aspects of humanity, anthropology may borrow theories and data from such and many other disciplines in the sciences and humanities (Andreatta and Ferraro, 2010). Anthropologists may find it useful to be acquainted with the works of economists, geographers, political scientists, philosophers, mythologists, and artists (Zerihun, 2005). Hence, we can say that there is a great overlap with other disciplines and there is a lot that anthropology can learn from them (Eriksen, 2001).

However, anthropology has its distinctive characteristics that distinguish it from other disciplines in the sciences and humanities. Among others, anthropology differs by its ***broad scope, unique approach, perspective, unit of analysis*** and ***methods.*** In its **scope**, anthropology studies humankind in its entirety. Unlike other disciplines, which focus on one factor such as biology, psychology, physiology, or society to explain human behavior, anthropology seeks to understand human beings as whole organisms, who adapt to their environments through a complex interaction of biology and culture (Scupin and DeCorse, 2012). Moreover, anthropology is a comparative science that examines all societies, ancient and modern, simple and complex.

Illustrating further, Eriksen (2001), stated that unlike sociology, anthropology does not concentrate its attention on the industrialized world; unlike philosophy, it stresses the importance of empirical research; unlike history, it studies society as it is being enacted; and unlike linguistics, it stresses the social and cultural context of speech, when looking at language. Indeed, anthropology has a truly **global focus** in that it

does not single out one region, or one kind of society, as being more important than others.

In its **approach**, anthropology studies and analyzes human cultures and societies *holistically, comparatively* and in a *relativistic manner* (Bailey and Peoples, 2012). In its **perspective**, anthropology approaches and locates dimensions of people's life, their shared group experiences, their thoughts and practices in terms of how these dimensions are interconnected and interrelated to one another; if not necessarily bounded or very orderly, whole. The perspective is also fundamentally ***empirical*** and ***naturalistic***. It is empirical, in that it relies on data collected in the field; directly from a study community in a naturalistic setting (Srange, 2009).

In its **method of research**, anthropology is unique in that it undertakes *extended and intense fieldwork* among a study group and develops intimate knowledge of the life and social worlds of the people through employing various ethnographic data collection techniques (Bailey and Peoples, 2012). It helps us to come up with ethnographic portrait of a group and its dynamics, including the composition of the group, its history, its ways of making a living in a particular environment, its social and political institutions, its belief systems and values, and its interaction and relation with other groups (Srange, 2009).

In its **unit of analysis**, anthropology takes **culture** as an organizing concept. This is not to say that the discipline is exclusively pre-occupied with culture. It is very much concerned with the social and the material world as well. However, anthropological studies are distinctive in attempting to connect this material world to cultural meanings (Peacock, 2002). In other words, it gives greater emphasis to culture, but always within a holistic framework. To illustrate, anthropological studies of human physical variation, for instance, relate the subject to human culture, and culturally dictated behaviors such as food habits, relation and adaptation with the environment, reproductive behavior, marriage, and family life and other material conditions.

In general, anthropology has its distinctive character as a systematic study of people, based on ethnographic fieldwork that it tries simultaneously to account for actual diversity in various dimensions of human life, and to develop a theoretical perspective on human behavior, culture and society (Eriksen, 2001). Once again, it is also important to note that anthropology is in a good position to bridge and

integrate the various disciplines, which examine the different dimensions of humanity and human society.

1.5 Contributions of Anthropology

Reflect your views on the following question.

- Do you think anthropology have any practical relevance to your everyday lives?
- Do you think anthropology can make a difference in the world?
- What are the practical application and contributions of anthropology in the context of the contemporary world, in general and in Ethiopia, in particular?

So far, we have discussed the fundamentals of the discipline of anthropology in brief and look at its scope and subject matter, distinguishing features, approaches, perspectives and methods. We see how anthropology is a uniquely, holistic and comparative discipline that examine all aspects of humanity across time and geographic space. Discussion on the relevance of anthropology with respect to both its practical application and what it contributes to understanding of human affairs follows.

Anthropology, with its holistic, cross-cultural perspective, has contributed in a number of important ways to the scientific understanding of humanity. One of its major contributions, in this regard, stems from the very broad task it has set for itself. As it was described before, whereas many disciplines in the sciences and humanities are considerably narrower in scope, anthropology has carved out for itself the task of examining all aspects of humanity, for all periods of time and for all parts of the globe (Andreatta and Ferraro, 2010). By this, anthropology allows us to comprehend the biological, technological and cultural development of humanity, over long period of time, and its entire aspects of existence and experiences. It provides us a window to look into the human world from a broader perspective.

More importantly, anthropology's contribution and practical relevance to our everyday lives are immense. By studying anthropology, we get the following benefits, among others.

First, the anthropological perspective, with its emphasis on the comparative study of cultures, should lead us to the conclusion that our culture is just one way of life among many found in the world, and that it represents one way (among many possible ways) to adapt to a particular set of environmental conditions (Andreatta and Ferraro, 2010). Through the process of contrasting and comparing, we gain a fuller understanding of other cultures.

With its holistic and comparative approaches, thus, anthropology serves us a corrective tool to deterministic thinking (Bailey and Peoples, 2012). Its broad, comparative perspective counterbalances oversimplified explanations, concerning all of humanity based on evidence obtained from a particular cultural world. For example, anthropological studies have revealed that great works of art are found in all parts of the world, not just in Western cultures; that social order can be maintained without having centralized, bureaucratic governments; that reason, logic, and rationality did not originate solely in ancient Greece; and that all morality does not stem from the so called 'modern' religious ethics (Andreatta and Ferraro, 2010). Anthropology, in other words, prevents us from taking our own cultural perspective too seriously or considering it as an absolute truth of the human world.

Another contribution of anthropology is that it helps us better understand and appreciate ourselves or our own ways of life. As Kluckhohn (1944), put it, "a*nthropology holds up a great mirror to man and lets him look at himself, in this infinite variety"* (1944:16). It explores and exposes us to the fascinating cultural variability of the world's diverse peoples. It is fair to state that anthropology's final basic role is to be a mirror for humanity (Kottak, 2007). Hence, it gives us an opportunity to understand and to be critical about the ways of lives of our own community. The best way of learning about our culture is to learn something about other cultures (Scupin and DeCorse, 2012). By looking at other cultures, we can better understand ourselves and the factors that shape our thoughts, values and behaviors.

Anthropology with its emphasis on people's own perspectives also gives us an insight into different ways and modes of life of human society (social and cultural diversity), which helps to understand the logic and justification behind group behavior and cultural practices (Howard and Dunaif-Hattis, 1992). It helps us to understand, why, for instance, the *Dani of western New Guinea* customarily cut off a finger from the hand of any close female relative of a man who dies, or some Inuit groups in the Arctic left out aging parents, who are too old to carry their share of the workload in the cold to die. Anthropology provides us insights into the nature of the world's diversity and how each culture is a logical and coherent entity (Bailey and Peoples, 2012).

Anthropology also creates an expanding **global awareness** and an appreciation for cultures other than our own (Scupin and DeCorse, 2012). Because, it is inherently global and cross-cultural, anthropology is well positioned to help people learn more about the social and cultural world of humanity. Knowledge about the rest of the world is particularly, important today because the world has become increasingly interconnected (Andreatta and Ferraro, 2010). So, today it is important that we, not only know something about other peoples of the world, but also grasp how our everyday decisions are influencing them in a multitude of ways and how others' decisions are also influencing ours (ibid, 2010).

Through its distinctive methodology of extended fieldwork, intensive, participant-observation research, anthropology offers a unique perspective on how local cultural groups are engaging with the process of globalization (Eriksen, 2001). An increasing number of people today are moving, both geographically and through cyberspace, outside their own familiar cultural borders, causing dramatic increases in cross-cultural contact and the potential for culture change (Scupin and DeCorse, 2012).

Although many scholars discuss the consequences of globalization by talking to only state or business leaders, anthropologists are more likely to see what is actually occurring on the ground and how the local people themselves talk about their life experiences in a time of rapid globalization and how they are responding to the globalization process (Andreatta and Ferraro, 2010). Anthropology facilitates our understanding of both the continuity and change, occurring in the diverse peoples and cultures of the world.

Because of its *relativistic approach*, anthropology helps us to be more sensitive to and appreciative of cultural diversity and variability. In the age of rapid communication, worldwide travel, and increasing interconnections, people must recognize and show sensitivity toward the cultural differences among peoples; while understanding the fundamental similarities that make us all distinctly human (Scupin and DeCorse, 2012). Nationalistic, ethnic and racial bigotry are widespread today in many parts of the world, and yet our continuing survival and success depend upon greater mutual understanding.

Anthropology promotes a cross-cultural perspective that allows us to see ourselves as part of one human family in the midst of tremendous diversity (Kottak, 2007). Our society needs not just citizens of some local region or group but also, and more importantly, world citizens; who can work cooperatively in an inescapably, multicultural and multinational world to solve our most pressing problems of bigotry, poverty, and violence.

Indeed, anthropology's relativistic approach helps us to avoid some of the misunderstandings arises from cultural differences. It helps us fight against prejudice and discriminations. Anthropology helps us fight against **ethnocentrism;** the belief that one's own culture and one's own way of life is superior to others' cultural, social and material lives (Eriksen, 2001). Such ethnocentric attitudes mainly arises from ignorance about other cultural/religious/ethnic groups and their ways of lives.

Accordingly, because of its relativistic, cross-cultural and interdisciplinary nature, anthropology helps us acquire skills crucial for living and working in the twenty-first century (Scupin and DeCorse, 2012). These skills includes developing a broad perspective, appreciating other points of view, operating comfortably in ambiguous situations, working effectively as part of cross-cultural teams, and becoming emotionally resilient, open-minded, and perceptually aware.

Anthropology cultivates **critical thinking skills** and helps us **develop broad perspective**. By exposing us to the cultures and lifestyles of unfamiliar societies, it may enable us to adopt a more critical and analytical stance toward conditions in our own society (Andreatta and Ferraro, 2010). In other words, by learning about behavior patterns and cultural values of other societies, we may question and acquire new insights into our own behavior.

Furthermore, exposure to the world of different cultures, provided by the study of anthropology, broadens our perspective. It helps us learn to appreciate others view points, to be non-judgmental, and open to new ways of thinking, which are vital to adapt to ever-changing environments (Kottak, 2007). Thus, the notions and insights derived from anthropology, can help us better meet our professional goals and lead more satisfying lives in a multicultural or a global society.

Apart from these, anthropology may offer more pragmatic applications. Knowledge gleaned from the discipline may enable practitioners and policy makers to find practical solutions for dealing with issues of cultural and ethnic diversity, and multiculturalism and solving various societal problems (Scupin and DeCorse, 2012).

Anthropology is used as an important tool for development. Paying attention to local conditions is crucial to solve community problems. The application of anthropological knowledge and research results has become important element to ensure people's rights in development and to be able to sustain projects' life (Kottak, 2007). Anthropologists are better equipped with the knowledge, skills and methods of identifying the needs and interests of local people for the betterment and change of their lived experiences (Srange, 2009).

Anthropology recognizes the advantages of consulting local people to design a culturally appropriate and socially sensitive change, and protect local people from harmful policies and projects that threaten them (Bailey and Peoples, 2012). Similarly, policy makers at federal, regional and local levels may find anthropologists' expertise knowledge useful in particular subjects to formulate practical solutions to immediate social problems (Scupin and DeCorse, 2012). In general, anthropology is able to suggest sound solutions to some of the major problems that afflict the world in the twenty-first century. For example, it is often applied in areas of *environmental change and development; globalization, culture change and global inequalities; poverty; health and nutrition; bilingual and multicultural education; ethnic and religious conflicts, social justice and human rights, cultural resource management* (CRM) *and the survival of 'indigenous' cultures and languages.*

1.6. Unit Summary

Dear Students!

In this unit, we have explored in a more general way the nature and fundamentals of anthropology as a field of inquiry. It is underscored that the discipline, at least in its modern form, emerged in late 19th century Europe as the science of human beings across broader spaces and times of existence. Ideally, anthropologists want to know how all the aspects and elements of people's lives are related and interconnected via carrying out extended fieldwork to collect empirical data from communities while they are in their natural setting and trying to understand the meanings people attached to events, phenomena and their ways of life. By bridging the sciences and the humanities, the discipline look at humanity's biological and cultural heritage with a broad perspective. Anthropology casts a wide net, seeking an understanding of ancient and contemporary peoples, biological and societal developments, and human diversity and similarities throughout the world.

It is important to note that there are few misconceptions about the nature and scope (areas of study), and purpose of anthropology, most ultimately based on ignorance or lack of awareness and misunderstanding of historical facts. However, anthropology has successfully contributed to the significance of local lives and local voices in an age of simmering waves of global forces. Understanding humanity in all its biological and cultural diversity, past and present is the fundamental contribution of anthropology. With its holistic and comparative perspectives, it creates a global awareness and a deep appreciation of humanity's past and present. It allows us to examine human life from many alternative perspectives; to study interactions between people objectively and insightfully, to adjust to various social situations, to fit into diverse communities by respecting their ways of life, and to be sensitive to the multitude of differences between the world's peoples. This contribution has become more important in the era of globalization, when appreciating our common humanity and respecting cultural differences are essential to human survival.

Suggested Reading Materials

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UNIT TWO

SUB-FIELDS OF ANTHROPOLOGY

Dear Students!

Welcome to Unit Two. This unit deals with the four major branches of anthropology. This Unit deals with the major sub-fields of anthropology. Anthropology is often divided into **four major subfield**s: Physical/Biological Anthropology, Archeology, Linguistic Anthropology and Socio-Cultural Anthropology.

Contents of the Unit

This Unit deals with definitions of the four main branches of anthropology. The Unit discusses physical anthropology in some detail focusing on the following issues: paleo-anthropological perspectives on human origins, perspectives on racial types, human physical variations, and the history of racial types.

Unit learning outcomes

Up on the successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

- define each branch of anthropology
- outline the significance of each branch of anthropology to explain human diversity and similarity
- examine perspectives on human physical variation and racial types

As noted above, in this unit, you will learn salient points on the **four major subfield**s of anthropology. Anthropology is often divided into: Physical/Biological Anthropology, Archeology, Linguistic Anthropology and Socio-Cultural Anthropology. Reflect on the following question before proceeding to the main discussion of the Unit.

Reflect your views on the following questions.

- Is it possible to study all aspects of human experiences?
- If so, how could we study it?

This Unit deals with the major sub-fields of anthropology. Anthropology is often divided into ***four major subfield***s: *Physical/Biological Anthropology, Archeology, Linguistic Anthropology and Socio-Cultural Anthropology*. Each sub-field of anthropology is further divided into a number of specialization areas some of which are indicated in Fig. 1.

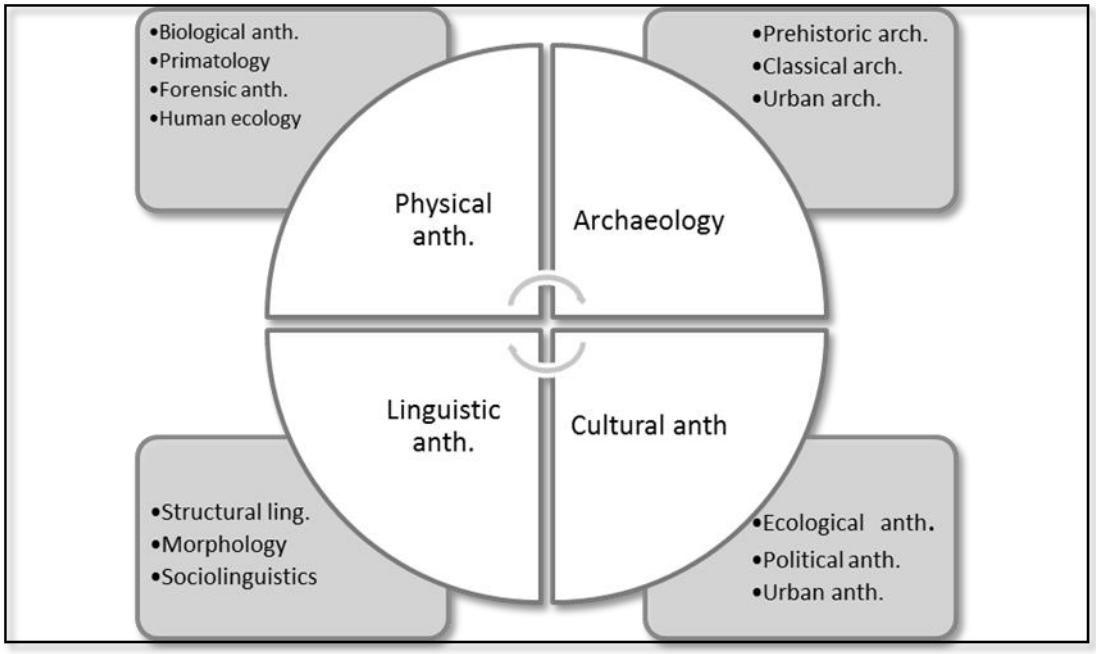

Figure 1: Branches of anthropology

The following sub-chapters provide students with an overview of each of the above mentioned branches of anthropology. Since socio-cultural anthropology is the concern of most chapters in this module, more attention has been given to biological/physical anthropology in this chapter.

2.1 Archaeological Anthropology

Reflect your views on the following questions.

- What do we mean by the human past?
- Which discipline tells you about the human distant past?
- What do we learn from our past?

Archaeological anthropology or simply archaeology studies the ways of lives of past peoples by excavating and analysing the material culture/physical remains (*artefacts, features* and *eco-facts*) they left behind. Archaeologists study artifacts to get clues about values, beliefs, and norms; in general, about the cultures of societies that existed in the past. **Artefacts** are *material remains made and used by the past peoples* and *that can be removed from the site and taken to the laboratory for further analysis*. Tools, ornaments, arrowheads, coins, and fragments of pottery are examples of artifacts. **Features,** *like artifacts, are made or modified by past people, but they cannot be readily carried away from the site*. Archaeological features include such things as house foundations, ancient buildings, fireplaces, steles, and postholes. **Eco-facts** are *non-artefactual, organic and environmental remains* such as soil, animal bones, and plant remainsthat were not made or altered by humans; but were used by them. Eco-facts provide archaeologists with important data concerning the environment and how people used natural resources in the past.

Archaeology has also its own subfields or areas of specialties. The most important ones include -*Prehistoric Archaeology, Historical Archaeology ethno-archaeology*. Prehistoric archaeology investigates human prehistoric cultures. It focuses on entire period called *prehistory*- between 6,000 years ago and the time of the first stone tools (the first artifacts), around 2.5 million years ago. Historic archaeologists help to reconstruct the cultures of people who used writing and about whom historical documents have been written. Historic archaeology takes advantage of the fact that about 6,000 years ago, some human groups invented language and began to write down things that can tell about the past. Historian archaeologists work together with historians to interpret artifacts of societies of the recent past. Ethno-archaeologists

study material culture of current societies (e.g., pottery products) to understand the cultures (life styles) of past societies.

We Ethiopians have very glorious past. Archaeological findings in north, south, east and western part of the country have shown our county belonged to those countries which have old civilization.

Reflect your views on the following questions.

- Discuss the lesson we get by studying our past?
- Have you ever visited any museums in your area?
- What kind of archaeological evidences are commonly found in your area?
- From your observation, which evidences are similar and different to those of communities/ groups around your nearby community?
- Why do you think is such differences and similarities happening?

2.2 Linguistic Anthropology

Linguistic anthropology generally focuses on the evolution of languages by studying contemporary human languages as well as those of the past. It studies how language is used within a society, and how the human brain acquires and uses languages. It tries to understand languages variation in their structures, units, and grammatical formations. It gives special attention to the study of unwritten languages. Language is a key to explore a culture.

Reflect your views on the following questions.

- Do you speak a language other than your mother tongue? If yes, what's the similarity & difference between the languages?
- What is the difference between human communication and any other animal communication?
- What distinguishes human communication from any other

animal communication?

- What do languages functions?

Indeed, linguistic anthropology or anthropological linguistics studies human language as a cultural resource and speaking as a cultural practice in its social and cultural context, across space and time. *Language* is basically a system of information transmission and reception. Humans communicate messages by sound (speech), by gesture (body language), and in other visual ways such as writing. Analogous to genes that carry and transmit genetic materials to descendants, languages hand down cultural traits from one generation to another. In fact, some would argue that language is the most distinctive feature of being human. Although animals could develop certain behaviors through conditioning that mimic to humans, they do not have a capacity to pass on their own offspring. This is the boundary between human beings and other animals including higher primates.

Linguistic anthropology is divided into four distinct branches or areas of research: *Structural or Descriptive Linguistics, Historical Linguistics, Ethno-Linguistics,* and *Socio-linguistics*.

***Structural /Descriptive* Linguistics: -**studies the structure of linguistic patterns. Structural linguistics studies grammatical patterns of languages to identify the similarities and differences among contemporary languages. It examines sound systems, grammatical systems, and the meanings attached to words in specific languages to understand the structure and set of rules of given language. Every culture has a distinctive language with its own logical structure and set of rules for putting words and sounds together for the purpose of communicating. In its simplest form, the task of the descriptive linguist is to compile dictionaries and grammar books for previously unwritten languages. For structuralist linguist or structural linguistic anthropologist, even if there are thousands of human languages, at least structurally all of them are similar making it possible for us to grasp and learn languages other than our so called 'mother tongue'.

Ethno-linguistics (*cultural linguistics):* examines the relationship between language and culture. In any language, certain cultural aspects that are emphasized (such as types of snow among the Inuit, cows among the pastoral Maasai, or

automobiles in U.S. culture) are reflected in the vocabulary. Moreover, cultural linguists explore how different linguistic categories can affect how people categorize their experiences, how they think, and how they perceive the world around them.

Historical linguistics: - deals with the emergence of language in general and how specific languages have diverged over time. It focuses on the comparison and classifications of different languages to differentiate the historical links between them.

Socio-linguistics: - Sociolinguistics examines how the use of language defines social groups. It investigates linguistic variation within a given language. No language is a homogeneous system in which everyone speaks just like everyone else. One reason for variation is geography, as in regional dialects and accents. Linguistic variation also is expressed in the bilingualism of ethnic groups.

Reflect your views on the following questions.

- What is relation between language and culture, and human thought patterns?
- Do you think that your language changes? If so, what makes language change?
- Would change in language brings any change on our identity?
- Can we maintain our identity in state of global changes?
- How does language construct identity, ideology, and narratives?

2.3 Socio-Cultural Anthropology

Reflect your views on the following questions.

- What is society?
- What is culture?
- How can we study cultures?
- What differentiate human society from other animals' society such as bees & ants?

This branch of anthropology is called differently in different parts of the world. It is called cultural anthropology in North American universities; ethnology in countries such as Germany; and social anthropology in other countries including the United Kingdom and Ethiopia. The name socio-cultural anthropology, however, appears to be more commonly used to refer to this largest sub-field of anthropology.

Socio-cultural anthropology studies contemporary societies and cultures throughout the world. In the past, however, mainly social anthropologists from the Western world conducted ethnographic fieldworks in non-Western societies in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Oceania. Many of the classical ethnographies of African societies were produced by ethnographers from the then colonial countries: France and Great Britain (currently the United Kingdom). Famous anthropologists such as Evans-Pritchard and Meyer Fortes conducted ethnographic research in the British colonies. Currently, socio-cultural anthropologists conduct fieldworks all over the world including in urban-industrial societies. Indigenous anthropology or 'anthropology at home' has also emerged as more and more anthropologists have begun doing fieldworks in their own societies.

Society is the group of people who have similar ways of life, but culture is a way of life of a group of people. Society and culture are two sides of the same coin. Socio-cultural anthropology describes, analyzes, interprets, and explains social, cultural and material life of contemporary human societies. It studies the social (human relations), symbolic or nonmaterial (religious, language, and any other symbols) and material (all man-made objects) lives of living peoples.

Socio-cultural anthropologists engage in two aspects of study: *Ethnography* (based on field work) and *Ethnology* (based on cross-cultural comparison). **Ethnography** provides a comprehensive account of a particular community, society, or culture. It describes the features of specific cultures in as much detail as possible including local behavior, beliefs, customs, social life, economic activities, politics, and religion. These detailed descriptions (ethnographies) are the result of extensive field studies (usually a year or two, in duration) in which the anthropologist observes, talks to, and lives with the people he or she studies. During ethnographic fieldwork, the anthropologist (ethnographer) gathers data that he or she organizes, describes,

analyzes, and interprets to build and present that account, which may be in the form of a book, article, or film.

Ethnology is the comparative study of contemporary cultures and societies, wherever they may be found. It examines, interprets, analyzes, and compares the results of ethnographic data gathered in different societies. It uses such data to compare and contrast and to make generalizations about society and culture. In other words, Ethnologists seek to understand both why people today and in the recent past differ in terms of ideas and behavior patterns and what all cultures in the world have in common with one another. Looking beyond the particular to the more general, ethnologists attempt to identify and explain cultural differences and similarities, to test hypotheses, and to build theory to enhance our understanding of how social and cultural systems work. Indeed, the primary objective of ethnology is to uncover general cultural principles, the “rules” that govern human behavior.

Ethnography	**Ethnology**
Requires field work to collect data	Uses data collected by a series of researchers
Often descriptive	Usually synthesizes ethnographic data
Group/community specific	Comparative/cross-cultural

Socio-cultural anthropology uses ethnographical and ethnological approaches to answer all sort of questions related to culture and human societies. To properly address emerging questions related to culture and societies, it has been sub-divided into many other specialized fields as: Anthropology of Art, Medical Anthropology, Urban Anthropology, Economic Anthropology, Political Anthropology, Development Anthropology, Anthropology of Religion, Demographic Anthropology, Ecological Anthropology, Psychological Anthropology, Ethnomusicology, etc. All of them are considered to be the applied areas of anthropology.

Reflect your views on the following questions

- From your life experiences, which sub-specialization of social-cultural anthropology could solve your community's problems?
- How did humankind arrive at the present stage of biological, intellectual, and cultural development?
- How are different people in different places similar and different, both biologically and culturally/behaviorally?
- Is there a common human nature, and if so, what is it like?
- How can we explain why cultures vary?

2.4 Physical/Biological Anthropology

Physical anthropology is a branch of anthropology that focuses on the biological aspects of human beings. It has sub-fields such as *biological anthropology*, *forensic anthropology*, *primatology*, *paleoanthropology*, *population genetics*, and *human ecology*. The subfields of physical anthropology are closely related to natural sciences, particularly biology. There are two major areas of research in physical anthropology: 1) human evolution, and 2) modern human variation.

Reflect your views on the following questions.

- In what ways do human beings differ from other animal species?
- What are the sources of biological variation?
- What differentiate human body from that of other animals'?
- How have human beings evolved up to the present time?
- What is evolution? We hope you remember your high school science lessons on evolution.

Research in human evolution shows that the origin of humanity is traced back over 6 million years. Africa is found to be the cradle of human beings. Research findings

indicate that East Africa, especially the Great Rift Valley, is the origin of mankind. The oldest fossils of human ancestors were discovered in this part of the continent. The discovery of fossils such as Lucy/Dinknesh (Australopithecus Afarensis) in the Afar Region shows that Ethiopia is among African countries regarded as the origin of human ancestors.

Physical anthropologists study how culture and environment have influenced biological evolution and contemporary human variations. Human biology affects or even explains some aspects of behavior, society, and culture like marriage patterns, sexual division of labor, gender ideology etc. The features of culture in turn have biological effects like the standards of attractiveness, food preferences, and human sexuality. Biological variations such as morphology/structure, color, and size are reflections of changes in living organism. Since change occurs in the universe, it also applies in human beings.

Human biological variations are the result of the cumulative processes of invisible changes occurring in human life. These changes have been accumulated and passed through genes. Genes are characteristics that carry biological traits of an organism, including human beings. The major sources of biological variations are derived from the interrelated effects of natural selection, geographical isolation and genetic mutations.

Physical anthropology is essentially concerned with two broad areas of investigation: ***human evolution*** and **genetics.** Human evolution is the study of the gradual processes of simple forms into more differentiated structures in hominid. It is interested in reconstructing the evolutionary record of the human species using fossils/bones. Human evolution is further divided into three specialties: *Paleoanthropology* and *Primatology.* Palaeoanthropology (*paleo* meaning “old”) is the study of human biological evolution through the analysis of fossil remains from prehistoric times to determine the missing link that connect modern human with its biological ancestors. Primatology studies about primates or recent human ancestors to explain human evolution. Primatologists study the anatomy and social behavior of such non-human primate species as gorillas and chimpanzees in an effort to gain clues about our own evolution as a species.

Human genetics concerns to investigate how and why the physical traits of contemporary human populations vary throughout the world. It focuses to examine the genetic materials of an organism such as DNA and RNA. In addition, genetic studies are crucial in understanding –how evolution works and plays important role in identifying the genetic source of some hereditary disease like sickle cell anemia and cystic fibrosis.

2.4.1. Evolutionary and Paleo-anthropological perspectives on human origin

Reflect your views on the following questions

- What does different world religions and cosmologies say about the origin of human beings?
- What about scientific (paleo-anthropological explanations) about the origin and evolution of human beings?
- Which are major Paleo-anthropological findings in Ethiopia?

One of the major questions anthropologists grapple with is the origins of humankind. The fossil record preserves evidence of past life on Earth, tracing a progression of simple one-celled organisms to increasingly diverse forms. How did these different forms of life emerge and new species arise? The biological explanations for this process are the focus of this section.

Comprehensive theories of evolution concerning the evolution of life were developed only during the 19thcentury. They were made possible through discoveries in many different areas. Indeed, the value of evolutionary theory is its utility as a unifying explanation for a wide variety of phenomena.

Anthropologists today rely on scientific views of evolution in order to explain human origins. Simply put, evolution refers to a process and gradual change in specie over time. In fact, evolution is used to describe the **cumulative effects** of three independent facts. Importantly, these attributes of evolution can be observed in nature every day. They are:

- **Replication:** The fact that life forms have offspring;

- **Variation:** The fact that each offspring is slightly different from its parents, and its siblings; and
- **Selection:** The fact that not all offspring survive, and those that do tend to be the ones best suited to their environment.

The scientific explanation of human origin and the concept of evolution are attributed to a series of discoveries of early modern period and the works of handful of scientists in the physical/natural sciences. One of the prominent persons in this regard is Charles Darwin (1809-1882), a British Naturalist of the period. Charles Darwin is known for his theory of **natural selection** in the evolution of species and the idea of **survival of the fittest**.

One of Charles Darwin's contributions to civilization was that he demonstrated that humanity was part of the world of living things. For thousands of years, Western civilization, backed up by the biblical story of creation, held humanity as a special creation fundamentally different from all other living things. By Darwin's time, many were beginning to question this creationist view. But the cultural pressure to conform to the dominant religion prevented most from saying so out loud. Yet, Darwin's ideas and many others that it fertilized set the foundation for a new study: the study of humans as living, evolving creatures in many ways no different from the rest of animal life.

Today, anthropologists have accumulated a huge amount of data, much of it based on studies of DNA, the molecule that shapes all Earth life, to back the claims Darwin made in 1859. In doing so, anthropologists study humanity as a biological phenomenon by raising questions such as:

- What species are we most and least like?
- Where and when did we fist appear?
- What were our ancestors like?
- Can we learn about human behavior from the behavior of our nearest relatives, the chimpanzees and gorillas?
- Is our species still evolving? How do modern human genetics, population growth, and other current issues play out from a biological perspective?

The answers to the above mentioned questions are the changes through time of the properties of a living species. That is, evolution is the foundation of the life sciences. Many kinds of life forms have become extinct (like the dinosaurs), but each of

today's living species (including humanity) has an evolutionary ancestry that reaches far back in time.

2.4.2 Anthropological perspectives on racial types and human physical variation

Reflect your views on the following questions

- Why isn't everyone the same?
- Why do people worldwide have differences in their phenotypic attributes?

People come in many colors and shapes; people of the Mediterranean, for example, are obviously darker-skinned than those of Scandinavia, and natives of the Arctic are shorter and stockier than the tall, lean Samburu of East Africa. Why is this? How did these variations come about, and what do they mean for humanity as a species?

The answer comes from the study of human biology by physical anthropologists. In this section we will see how human populations have adapted to their varying environments by the same evolutionary process that shapes all living things from the perspective of race.

Like all living things with sensory input, humans have to classify their perceptions into some kind of order: these things go with these others but don't belong in this group. Some people have darker skin, so they're in the "darker skin" category. Obviously, not all human beings look the same, so humans have spent some time putting people of different colors, body shapes, and so on into different categories sometimes called races. Unfortunately, this tendency has had some very bad consequences for millions of human beings over the centuries.

Biologically speaking, a **race** is a group of organisms of the same species that share similar physical (and genetic) attributes and specific geographic regions. In short, they're subdivisions of a single species- meaning they can mate and have offspring that are healthy enough to have their own offspring-exhibiting some characteristics reflecting their geographical origins.

This definition is pretty slippery, though, because finding good examples of distinctly different races is difficult. The most visible non-human animal races are those of dogs. Wherever you go, all dogs are in the same species-*Canis familiaris*- but they have obvious physical differences. Strictly speaking, they're of different races - and even this isn't so strict, because these differences come from humans selectively breeding these animals for certain characteristics, not from their originally inhabiting very different environments. Once, all dogs (most likely first domesticated about 20,000 years ago) were wolf-like, and their modern diversity is more a result of human selective breeding than geographical adaptation.

Just like any other living thing, human beings adapt to their environments through an evolutionary process. Throughout this unit we will see the ways in which our species adapts mainly through cultural means; that is, we survive our environments not because we've adapted to them biologically, but with artifacts and complex behavior. In this respect, it should be noted that human bodies (human beings) have adapted to certain conditions over time.

Adaptation can be understood as a process (behavioral and/or biological) that increases the likelihood of survival for an organism. An adaptation can be a mutation that confers an advantage. For example, a frog that has better-camouflaged skin than its siblings has a lower chance of being snapped up by a fish, and therefore a stronger chance to survive and have offspring that will carry the gene for better-adapted camouflage. In humans, adaptations include complex behavior, such as making tools. These behaviors aren't passed on genetically but rather culturally.

Some of these bodily adaptations are pretty easily visible, and some are only visible when you look very closely at the genes. Skin color—one of the most visible human characteristics - is a good example of adaptation to a particular environment. The darkest skin appears in populations originating in tropical zones, such as Africa and Asia. The lightest skin is traditionally found in northern Europe because over time, natural selection favored darker skins in areas that received extensive and more intensive sunlight, because individuals with lighter skin in these areas were more prone to skin cancers. Darker skin, then, is an adaptation to the geographical conditions of Africa.

What's the adaptive value of lighter skin? It has to do with vitamin D, of all things. Vitamin D is a nutrient that helps human bones form properly. Without enough vitamin D, deformities like the disease *rickets*, which normally includes bowed legs and a misshapen pelvis, will occur.

Humans naturally produce Vitamin D through the skin when they're exposed to sunlight, but cloudier parts of the world - like northern Europe - are exposed to much less sunlight than regions in the tropics, where the species began. As early human populations were expanding into northern Europe around 40,000 years ago, those individuals with darker skin were less able to manufacture Vitamin D and probably experienced a much lower birthrate than those populations with lighter skin. Lighter skin, then, is an adaptation to the geographical conditions of Europe because over time, the prehistoric colonists of Europe who happened to be born with lighter skin (simply by chance) had more offspring, who themselves carried the genes for lighter skin.

Biological adaptations aren't instantaneous. They take place over the span of generations, so an African moving to Europe won't evolve lighter skin, nor will a European travelling to Africa evolve darker skin (except for some tanning). A suntan is a lighter-skinned body's defense mechanism - the release of dark pigmented melanin - against too much ultraviolet light.

Another example of biological adaptation in human beings is the difference of stature between arctic (such as Inuit) and East African (such as Maasai) people. In biology, ***Bergmann's rule*** indicates that in colder regions, warm-blooded animals will have stockier bodies than their counterparts from warmer regions, because stockier bodies are more efficient at retaining body heat. In the cold Polar Regions, the Inuit have a short and stocky build; the Maasai of East Africa have taller and more slender bodies that don't have to retain so much heat - they actually have to dump excess heat in their hot environment, which is facilitated by their body shape. Body stature in these cases is an adaptation to the geographical conditions of hot African and the cold Arctic.

The rapid physiological changes that occur in one's lifetime - like a mountaineer's adjustment to lower oxygen levels at high altitude - are referred to as *habituation* or *acclimatization*. These ***aren't*** passed on genetically to the next generation (because

changes acquired during life can't be encoded in the genes,) and they're reversible (as when the mountaineer returns to lower elevations.)

2.4.3 Human Races: The history of racial typing

Reflect your views on the following questions.

- What can you say for sure about human races?

Like all animals, humans have undoubtedly been classifying their neighbors in various ways for a very long time.

Some of the first records of humans classifying others as certain "types" come from ancient Egypt, where by 1350 BC you can see records of them classifying humans by skin color: Egyptians were red-skinned, people south of Egypt were black-skinned, those living north of the Mediterranean Sea were white-skinned, and people to the east were yellow-skinned.

By the the16th century, during the Age of Discovery, Europeans voyaging around the world were encountering many previously unknown peoples and developing racial classifications of their own. Because skin color was so noticeable, many racial classifications were based only on that factor. Additionally, these unknown people weren't Christian and didn't share European culture and values, so the Europeans labeled them Savages. In fact, they thought they could use racial type as an indicator of just how Savage a person was. Though most have ditched this concept today, many racial supremacists still believe that cultural behavior correlates with skin color, nose shape, hair texture, or what have you.

By the mid-1800s, naturalists began using a method of describing the shape of the head called the *cephalic index*, a ratio measurement of the length and width of the head. *Dolichocephalic* peoples had long and narrow heads (like most northern Europeans), and *brachycephalic* peoples tended to have broad heads — like many southern Europeans. Not surprisingly, this classification scheme and others like it led to many arguments about which peoples were superior to the others.

The root problem of all this flailing around at the identification of human types was *biological determinism*, the idea that physical traits were somehow linked to behavior. Many thought traits like intellect, values, and morals were all products of one's race. Today, most people know better, although some people still call for "racial purity," an impossible and destructive idea.

A similar way that everyone-including early anthropologists-had this idea all wrong was in the application of Darwin's principles of biological evolution to societies. This led to a concept known as *social Darwinism,* the idea that as societies and nations evolved and competed, the morally superior societies would prevail as the less-moral, "savage" societies were weeded out; and that this was all natural and good. Around this time debates about the superiority or inferiority of particular groups continued, and some began to fear that civilized (meaning northern European Christian) society was slowly being destroyed by "unfit" peoples who, for one reason or another, were not being weeded out.

With behavioral characteristics "linked" to genetic characteristics in the minds of many (including scientists), some in the 19th and early 20th centuries even advocated for state regulation of marriages, family size, and whether to allow an individual to reproduce. This practice became known as *eugenics*, and the Nazis took it to a terrible extreme during World War II. In Germany, the Nazi party began to systematically kill those members of society that it considered inferior to the northern-European Christian ideal they held. Using eugenics as the basis for its acts, the Nazi party killed millions of Jewish people, Gypsies and others it considered inferior in an attempt to create a master race.

The problems with the concept of a master race — aside from the obvious moral issues surrounding eugenics — is that biological variation is necessary for the health of a population. Basically, if all members of a population are the same, the population has no buffer against a particularly lethal or catastrophic disease or any other major change in the species' selective environment. If everyone is the same, everyone is susceptible to the same potential disaster. For this reason, many biologists measure the overall health of a species by its very genetic diversity. So even if a master race were possible, and one could (and would want to) manage to

prevent any interbreeding, the end result would be a genetically uniform and genetically vulnerable population. The idea of a master race is therefore suicidal.

2.4.4 The Grand Illusion: Race, turns out, is arbitrary

Reflect your views on the following question

☙ Why do you think is race become an elusive concept?

Over the years, various anthropologists have attempted to classify the human species into various races, such as Caucasian, Black African, Asian, and so on. The problem is that the physical traits used to identify which group an individual belonged in aren't binary opposites like black or white, with no middle ground. They're *continuous* traits, meaning that a whole spectrum exists between, say: "black" and "white" skin designations.

Any attempt to classify human races raises a number of questions. Although Asians look pretty clearly different from Europeans in some respects, what do you do with people who look, well, partly Asian and partly European? And does "European" end in the Middle East, where some African traits are present? Where does Africa even begin, genetically speaking? Who's going to draw up the lines between "black" and "white" (and what qualifies that person for the job, anyway)? One thorough 1972 study by Harvard anthropologist R.C. Lewontin concluded that "Human racial classification is of no social value and is positively destructive of social and human relations. Since such racial classification is now seen to be of virtually no genetic or taxonomic [classifying] significance either, no justification can be offered for its continuance." Bottom line: For most professional anthropologists today, human "race" is an antiquated concept. For biomedical reasons (and sometimes forensic identification of bodies), the reality of genetic ancestry can be important, but color coded races, loaded with behavioral traits, are basically arbitrary.

2.4.5. What Anthropologists can say for sure about Human Races?

So do human races exist? Very strictly speaking, yes. *Homo sapiens sapiens* does feature geographically based differences within the species. However, you must consider two very important points.

First, these genetic differences don't mean a lot, biologically. Because all healthy humans can mate and have healthy offspring, we're all in *Homo sapiens sapiens,* biologically speaking. Not only is it inaccurate to say "the female species" when talking about significant sex differences between males and females, but it's also inaccurate to say "the African race" or the "European race" when speaking of deep differences in these peoples. A look at the genes shows no significant species-level differences — only very minor visible ones such as skin color, shape of nose, or hair texture. Biologically speaking, though, these differences aren't important. For most physical anthropologists (who've spent the most time closely examining human biology), race is nearly meaningless when applied to humanity.

Rather than talk about races, physical anthropologists more commonly talk today of **ancestry**, a more general term that recognizes the reality of some geographically specific human adaptations but doesn't turn them into loaded; black-and-white races. Ancestry may be important, for example, when considering someone's genetic health because different human populations have developed slightly different genetic characteristics over time.

Second - and most important - is that cultural behavior isn't genetically linked to those geographical differences. This disconnect is one of anthropology's most important discoveries and lessons for humanity. People from Scandinavia aren't reserved - or whatever other behavioral trait you may apply to them - because it's in their genes to be so. It's not. Most of human behavior isn't biologically determined or filtered in through the natural environment - most of it is culturally learned. An infant from Japan can be raised in the Kalahari of Southern Africa and won't automatically remove his shoes when going into a home unless his culture specifically teaches him to do so. Like any human can acquire any language, any infant can acquire any culture; it's culture that really drives behavior, not the genes. The ancient belief that human races have innate behavioral traits-industrious Asians or hot-blooded Mediterraneans-is simply wrong.

One of the main reasons the race concept really doesn't apply to humans is that defining human races is almost impossible: To what race do you assign a person born from a Native American and a native African marriage? Do you create a new race in this case? Although some of these designations do exist, to come up with a race for every possible combination of ancestries would be an infinite job. Plus, it

would just be another exercise in drawing lines where they don't really exist. And what's "black" or "white"? Is a Greek person black or white? Of course, they're in between. Assigning people to a race based on skin color becomes an exercise in holding up paint chips to the skin.

2.5. Human socio-cultural and biological diversity and similarities: What is to be human?

Reflect your views on the following questions

- What do you understand by the term humanity and human diversity/variation?
- What makes human beings different from other animals?
- Origin and evolution of human beings?

As you learnt in other units of this module, anthropology is a broader discipline covering a vast spatio-temporal dimension in the study of humanity. Anthropology is unique among most academic disciplines both in the social and natural sciences. It is the most holistic discipline studying human beings comprehensively. Anthropology's four major branches bridge the natural sciences, the humanities and the social sciences. They touch virtually on every aspect human beings. In this regard, the largest two branches of anthropology: the socio-cultural and biological/physical cover the two essential dimensions of humanity: socio-cultural and biological diversity and similarities.

Since anthropology studies humanity in its entirety, it is often called a mirror of humanity. As Kluckhohn correctly pointed out, "Anthropology holds up a great mirror to man and lets him look at himself in his infinite variety." In this case, anthropology helps human beings to look into themselves by searching for answers to questions that challenge us. Some of the questions central to humanity and anthropology are:

- What are the commonalities among humans worldwide? (That is, what does every human culture do?)
- What are the variations among humans worldwide (That is, what things do only some cultures do?)

- Why do these commonalties and variations exist in the first place? (In other worlds, why aren't all human cultures the same?)
- How does humanity change through time? (Is it still evolving, and if so, how?)
- Where has Humanity been, and what can that show us about where humanity is going? (That is, what can we learn about ourselves today, from the past?)

In order to address these questions, we should rely on key anthropological concepts of comparative approach (cultural relativism) and evolution. The comparative approach, which is also known as cultural relativism, entails that cultures shouldn't be compared to one another for the sake of saying one is better than the other. Instead cultures should be compared in order to understand how and why they differ and share commonalties with each other. The comparative approach or cultural relativism encourages us not to make moral judgments about different kinds of humanity, and it examines cultures on their own and from the perspective of their unique history and origin.

Evolution is another key concept in anthropology which, together with the cultural relativism allows us to address the afore-mentioned fundamental questions regarding our distant origin, current stage of growth, forms of adaptation, and predict future direction of development. By studying evolution, the change of species through time, anthropologists treat humanity as one of the biological species in the animal kingdom.

In this respect, human biology and culture have evolved over millions of years and they will continue to evolve together. Human biology affects human culture; and similarly, human culture affects human biology. One example of this is that the brain size of humans has become larger over millions of years of evolution, and this is considered biological change. The change in human brain has brought cultural changes in terms of increased intelligence, language and even the emergence of writing. This is why anthropologists use the term bio-cultural to describe the dual nature of human evolution: both biological and cultural dimensions. Human beings are described as a bio-cultural animal. In what follows we will see the meaning of bio-cultural evolution with practical examples.

The bio-cultural animal

As we have discussed above, humanity evolves both as a result of biological factors and cultural factors. For this reason, anthropologists call it **bio-cultural evolution**. Culture, which you have learnt at length in this module, is the set of ideas that dictate how you see and act in the world. Although humans survive by using both their biology and cultural information, all other animals survive mainly through their biology and by relying on instinct rather than such cultural information.

For example, cultural, not instinctual, information tells you certain kinds of wood are good for making a digging stick. You don't know about different kinds of wood instinctually but because detailed information about the properties of different kinds of wood was passed on to your mind culturally — through some form of language — by your parent generation or your peers.

This difference may seem trivial, but it's actually very important. For example, consider the following cultural behaviors and their possible involvement with biological evolution of our species:

- The earliest use of stone tools corresponds with increased consumption of animal protein. More animal protein in turn changes the hominid diet and potentially its anatomy.
- The use of clothing (itself a cultural artifact) allows human bodies to survive in environments they wouldn't normally survive in. For example, the human body is naturally best-suited for equatorial environments, not the Arctic, but the invention of heavy coats and other such clothing enables that body to survive Arctic temperatures.

As a result, Paleo-anthropologists are concerned with understanding how cultural, non-cultural, and bio-cultural evolutionary factors shaped humanity through time. If this is the case, let us first see the meaning of humanity from the anthropological perspective.

Humanity is the most common term we to use to refer to human beings. Humanity stands for the human species, a group of life forms with the following characteristics:

- Bipedalism (walking on two legs);
- Relatively small teeth for primates of our size;

- Relatively large brains for primates of our size;
- Using modern language to communicate ideas; and
- Using complex sets of ideas called culture to survive.

Standing on two legs and having particularly small teeth and large brains are all anatomical characteristics, and they're studied by anthropologists focusing on human biological evolution. Surviving by using a wide array of cultural information (including instructions for making a pottery or farming tools in Ethiopia) is the use of culture. It's studied by other anthropologists, and even more study the evolution of language.

Humanity is a general term that doesn't specify whether you're talking about males, females, adults, or children; it simply means our species- *Homo sapiens sapiens*- at large. The term *humanity* can be applied to modern humans *(Homo sapiens sapiens)* as well as some of our most recent ancestors, placed more generally in *Homo sapiens,* without the subspecies (the second *sapiens*) suffix. Exactly when *Homo sapiens* evolved into *Homo sapiens sapiens* is a complex question based on when humans became *anatomically* modern and when they became *behaviorally* modern.

Reflect your views on the following issue

- Write short essay on the difference between anatomical modernity and behavioral modern origin and evolution of human beings?

2.6. Unit Summary

Dear Students! In this unit, we have explored the four major branches of anthropology: Archaeological anthropology, linguistic anthropology, socio-cultural anthropology, and physical anthropology. We have also discussed anthropological perspectives on human origin, racial types and human physical variations. In the next unit, we will learn basic anthropological concepts including culture, norms and values; ethnocentric and cultural relativism; and social institutions such as marriage, family and kinship.

Suggested readings

Kottack, Conrad Phillip. 2002. *Cultural Anthropology* (9th Edition), McGraw Hill (pp. 302-356).

Scupin, R. and DeCorse, C. C. 2004. *Anthropology: A Global Perspective* (5th Edition). New Delhi: Prentice-Hall India.

UNIT THREE

HUMAN CULTURE AND TIES THAT CONNECT SOCIETY

Dear Students!

Welcome to unit Three. This unit examines the anthropological concept of culture and helps students to increase their understanding of the role and impact of culture in human life. The unit explores the distinct qualities/characteristic features of human cultures, the key components of culture that govern human behaviors. It also explains cultural traits which are considered to be universal/ general and particular, the ideas of ethnocentrism, cultural relativism and universal human rights as well as the changing nature of culture. Finally, the unit deals with major social institutions such as marriage, family and kinship.

In due course, students are required to assume active role in class activities and discussions; sharing of experiences, undertake different debates and arguments and carefully administer take-home assignments.

Contents of the Unit:

The major topics to be treated in this unit include: The nature, meaning, aspects and elements of the central and prominent anthropological concept, culture: as both a defining and differentiating aspect of societies. Concepts such as family, marriage and kinship with their manifestations, classifications and dimensions are also discussed under this unit.

Unit learning outcomes:

Up on the successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe the meaning, characteristics, and functions of culture;
- Explain aspects of culture that govern human behavioral pattern;
- Develop skills in understanding, accepting and respecting cultural differences;
- Describe the mechanisms and patterns of culture change; and

- Understand the basic building blocks of human society - marriage, family, and kinship systems and how they fulfill social needs.

3.1. Conceptualizing Culture: What Culture is and What Culture isn't

Reflect your views on the following questions.

- How do you define culture?
- What do you think are the tributes of culture?
- Do you think culture differentiates human being from other animals?

Definition of Culture

The concept culture is one of the most contested and widely used notions in anthropology and sociology… "It is used with various meanings in common sense. The term culture makes the backbone of sociocultural anthropology and sociology and other related disciplines such as cultural geography and social psychology" (Zerihun, 2005).

Anthropologists have not been totally precise, or totally consistent , in their usages of this crucial concept. Some representative attempts at definition reveal different facets of culture:

- A pioneering and widely used definition of culture was provided by the British anthropologist Edward B. Tylor (1832-1917). He defined culture as "*that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society*"(Tylor, 1871).
- Bronislaw. Malinowski has defined culture "*as cumulative creation of man". He regarded culture as the handiwork of man and the medium through which he achieves his ends*" (Encyclopedia of social sciences, 1931).
- The sum total of knowledge, attitudes and habitual behavior patterns shared and transmitted by the members of a particular society (Linton, 1940).
- Clyde Kluckhohn (1949) defined culture as a way of thinking, feeling, believing. It is the group's knowledge stored up (in memories of men; in books and objects) for future use.

Many other anthropologists have also contributed to the definitions of the concept culture. A common attribute of most of the definitions, however, is that a culture is learned and that the learning is related to the social group or the society. We shall refer to a culture here simply as the distinctive way of life of a group of people, their complete design for living. This usage helps us to understand human behavior. The diversity of human behavior is also classified when we realize that each human society has a distinctive culture. The concept is limited further in being mainly applicable to those aspects of learned behavior that are appropriate to a particular group of people (Oke, 1991).

In sum, Stewart and Glynn state the concept of culture as one of the major interests of anthropology and sociology. The further state that much that was once attributed to race and heredity is now seen clearly as the result of cultural training. The Iroquois were savage fighters not because it was in their blood but because it was in their culture. The Hopi are outwardly calm and imperturbable people not because it is in their blood (or, more correctly, chromosomes) but because it is in their culture. Culture train people along particular lines, tending to place a personality stamp upon them reading “Made in the USA,” “Made in France” or Made in Germany.” This is not to say that all people are alike in any particular culture, for people have their own idiosyncrasies and a blend of heredity, cultural experience, subcultural experience, family experience, and unique, personal experience. Nevertheless, the total experience of growing up in one culture leaves its mark upon the individual. So that a Korean child reared in America can seem typically American, and an Anglo-American child reared in Korea can seem, in cultural respects, Korean (Stewart and Glynn, 1988).

3.2 Characteristic Features of Culture

Dear students, the concept of culture was developed out of the need for an objective term to characterize the similarities and wide differences among human societies (Oke, 1991). For the better understanding of the concept, it is necessary for us to know its main features. In the following sections we will provide the characteristic features of culture.

a. Culture Is Shared and learned

Culture is an attribute not of individuals as such but of individuals as members of groups. Culture is not an individual possession; rather it is shared by a group of people. Shared beliefs, values, memories, and expectations link people who grow up in the same culture. Enculturation unifies people by providing us with common experiences.

People in the United States sometimes have trouble understanding the power of culture because of the value that American culture places on the idea of individual. Americans are fond of saying that everyone is unique and special in some way. However, in American culture individualism is a distinctive shared value (Kottak, 2005).

For a thing, idea, or behavior pattern to qualify as being “cultural” it must have a shared meaning by at least two people within a society. In order for a society to operate effectively, the guidelines must be shared by its members. Without shared culture members of a society would be unable to communicate and cooperate hence confusion and disorder would result. “However, we should note that not all things shared among a group of people are cultural. There are many biological and psychological characteristics are shared among a group of people” (Zerihu, 2005).

The ease with which children absorb any cultural tradition rests on the uniquely elaborated human capacity to learn. Other animals may learn from experience, so that, for example, they avoid fire after discovering that it hurts. Social animals also learn from other members of their group. Wolves, for instance, learn hunting strategies from other pack animals. Such social learning is particularly important among monkeys and apes, our closest biological relatives. But our own cultural learning depends on the uniquely developed human capacity to use symbols (Kottak, 2005). Cultural learning is unique to human beings. Other animals do not have culture.

Culture is not transmitted genetically; rather it is acquired through the process of social interaction and learning among human groups. More than any other species, human beings rely for their survival on behavior patterns that are learned. Humans have no instinct, which genetically transmitted to direct to behave in a particular way.

This process of acquiring culture after we born is called enculturation. Enculturation is specifically defined as the process by which an individual learns the rules and values of one's culture.

b. Culture Is Symbolic

Until quite recently, anthropologists confidently asserted that what made humans distinctive was that they, unlike other primates, had a capacity to use symbols, signs whose relationship to things they signify (their referents) is arbitrary (Keesing, 1981). Symbolic thought is unique and crucial to humans and to cultural learning. It is the human ability to give a thing or event an arbitrary meaning and grasp and appreciate that meaning (Zerihun, 2005).

c. Culture Is All-Encompassing

Culture encompasses all aspects, which affect people in their everyday lives. Culture comprises countless material and non-material aspects of human lives. Thus, when we talk about a particular people's culture, we are referring to all of its manmade objects, ideas, activities whether those of traditional, old time things of the past or those created lately. Culture is the sum total of human creation: intellectual, technical, artistic, physical, and moral; it is the complex pattern of living that directs human social life, and which each new generation must learn and to which they eventually add with the dynamics of the social world and the changing environmental conditions.

d. Culture Is Integrated

We have indicated in chapter one that a distinguishing feature of anthropology is its *holistic approach*. By this we mean that anthropology stresses the study of the whole society. This is possible because the various aspects of a culture are interrelated. We are saying that which make up that culture are not simply a random assortment of customs. In other words, cultures are not haphazard collections of customs and beliefs. Instead, culture should be thought as of integrated wholes, the parts of which, to some degree, are interconnected with one another. When we view cultures as integrated systems, we can begin to see how particular culture traits fit into the whole system and, consequently, how they tend to make sense within that context.

"The functionalists, led by Bronislaw Malinowski, cogently expressed this position. They saw a culture as a means of satisfying the basic and derived needs of man and

emphasized the ways in which all traits of a culture are interrelated" (Oke, 1991). A culture is a system, change in one aspect will likely generate changes in other aspects. For example change in production technology may bring change in life styles of the society and ideologies. A good way of describing this integrated nature of culture is by using the analogy between a culture and a living organism. The physical human body comprises a number of systems, all functioning to maintain the overall health of the organisms, including among others, such system as the circulatory system, respiratory system, the digestive system, the skeletal system, excretory system, the reproductive system, and lymphatic system.

e. Culture Can Be Adaptive and Maladaptive

Humans have both biological and cultural ways of coping with environmental stresses. Besides our biological means of adaptation, we also use "cultural adaptive kits," which contain customary activities and tools that help us in managing everyday lives.

People adapt themselves to the environment using culture. The ability to adapt to any of the ecological conditions, unlike other animals, makes humans unique. Culture has allowed the global human population size to grow from less than 10 million shortly after the end of the last ice age to more than 7 billion today, a mere 10,000 years later. This ability is attributed to human's capacity for creating and using culture.

Sometimes, adaptive behaviour that offers short-term benefits to particular subgroups or individuals may harm the environment and threaten the group's long-term survival. Example: Automobiles permit us to make a living by getting us from home to workplace. But the by-products of such "beneficial" technology often create new problems. Chemical emissions increase air pollution, deplete the ozone layer, and contribute to global warming. Many cultural patterns such as overconsumption and pollution appear to be maladaptive in the long run.

f. Culture is Dynamic

Although we have stressed that each society has its own culture which enables the individual to adjust to his total settings, we should emphasize here that a culture is not static, it is always changing. There are no cultures that remain completely static year after year. Culture is changing constantly as new ideas and new techniques are

added as time passes modifying or changing the old ways. Although a culture constantly changes, certain fundamental beliefs, values, world views, and practices like child rearing endure (Kottak, 2005).

Reflect your views on the following questions.

- How is culture learned?
- What do we mean by culture is adaptive and maladaptive?
- How does culture contributes for social survival?

3.3. Aspects /elements of Culture

Culture includes within itself elements that make up the essence of a society or a social group. Two of the most important aspects of culture are material and nonmaterial culture.

3.1.1. Material culture

Material culture consists of human-made objects such as tools, implements, furniture, automobiles, buildings, dams, roads, bridges, and in fact, the physical substance which has been changed and used by man. It is concerned with the external, mechanical and utilitarian objects. It includes technical and material equipment. It is referred to as civilization.

3.3.2. Non-Material Culture

The term ‘culture’ when used in the ordinary sense, means ‘non-material culture’. It is something internal and intrinsically valuable, reflects the inward nature of man. Non-material culture consists of the words the people use or the language they speak, the beliefs they hold, values and virtues they cherish, habits they follow, rituals and practices that they do and the ceremonies they observe. It also includes our customs and tastes, attitudes and outlook, in brief, our ways of acting, feeling and thinking. Some of the aspects of non-material culture are listed as follows:

Reflect your views on the following activity

- Write down any items/activities that show your culture. Then differentiate which one is material and non-material culture.

Even though the specifics of individual culture vary widely, all cultures have four common nonmaterial cultural components: symbols, language, value and norms. These components contribute to both harmony and strife in a society (kendall, 2005).

Symbols

A symbol is anything that meaningfully represents something else which people use to communicate with others. It is something verbal or nonverbal, within a particular language or culture that comes to stand for something else. There would be no obvious, natural, or necessary connection between the symbol and what it symbolizes (Kottak, 2005).

Culture could not exist without symbols because there would be no shared meanings among people. A symbol's meaning is not always obvious. However, many symbols are powerful and often trigger behaviors or emotional states. Symbols can simultaneously produce loyality and animosity, and love and hate. They help us communicate ideas such as love or patriotism because they express abstract concepts with visible objects. For example, flags can stand for patriotism, nationalism, school spirit, or religious beliefs held by members of a group or society (Kendall, 2005).

Language

The capacity to use symbols, expressed in language, enabled humans to cumulate cultural traditions, to communicate propositions and plans (Keesing, 1981). Language, specifically defined as a system of verbal and in many cases written symbols with rules about how those symbols can be strung together to convey more complex meanings, is the distinctive capacity and possession of humans; it is a key element of culture. Culture encompasses language, and through language, culture is

communicated and transmitted. Without language it would be impossible to develop, elaborate and transmit culture to the future generation (Zerihun, 2005).

Values

Values are collective /shared ideas as to what is right or wrong, good or bad, desirable or not desirable, ethical or unethical, moral or immoral in a particular culture. Values do not dictate which behaviors are appropriate and which ones are not, but they provide us with the criteria by which we evaluate people, objects and events. Values typically come in pairs of positive and negative values, such as being brave or cowardly, hardworking or lazy. Since we use values to justify our behavior, we tend to defend them staunchly (Kluckhohn, 1961). Values are like road maps or guiding principles that dictate our behavior and actions. For example, individualism, achievement and success, faith in science and technology, progress and material success are among core American values (Kendall, 2005). Values are also diversified, meaning they vary from place to place and culture to culture. Some values are universal because there is bio- psychological unity among people everywhere and all times. In other words, they emanate from the basic similarity of mankind's origins, nature and desires. For example, marriage, hospitality, disease management, cleanliness, personal hygiene, cosmetics, incest taboo, etc. (Zerihun, 2005).

Norms

They are derived from value. Values provide ideals or beliefs about behavior, but do not state explicitly how we should behave. Norms on the other hand, do have specific behavioral expectations. Norms are established rules of behavior or standard of conduct. For every norm, there is a specific guiding value. Norms are detailed and specific social rules for specific situations. They tell us how to do (something), what to do, what not to do, when to do it, why to do it, etc.

Norms are enforced by sanctions. Sociologists and anthropologists use the term sanctions to refer to positive or negative reactions to the ways in which people follow norms. The term positive sanction refers to an expression of approval given for following a norm, while a negative sanction is disapproval for breaking it. Positive sanctions can be material, such as money reward, a prize, or trophy, but in everyday life they usually consist of hugs, smiles, a clap on the back, soothing worlds, or even

handshakes. Negative sanctions also can be material-----a fine is one example----but they, too, are more likely to consist gestures, such as frowns, stares, harsh words, or raised fists.

Individuals may not act according to the defined values and norms of the group. Therefore, violation of values and norms and deviating from the standard values and norms are often common. Based on their level of importance social norms are divided into two. These are mores and folkways

. **Folkways**: Norms guiding ordinary usages and conventions of everyday life are known as folkways. Folkways are norms that are not strictly enforced, such as not leaving your seat for an elderly people inside a bus / taxi, talking loudly on the telephone being in the tax, odd dressing, etc. These will result no serious reaction from the society. These may result in a person getting a bad look.

a) **Mores**: Mores (pronounced MORE-rays) are much stronger norms than are folkways. Mores are norms that are believed to be essential to core values and we insist on conformity. Breaking mores might result serious reaction from the community. For example, a person who steals, rapes, and kills has violated some of society's most important mores, and hence will be subject to serious penalty.

b) People who violate mores are usually severely punished, although punishment for the violation of mores varies from society to society. It may take the form of ostracism, vicious gossip, public ridicule, exile, loss of one's job, physical beating, imprisonment, commitment to a mental asylum, or even execution.

3.4 Cultural Unity and Variations: Universality, Generality & Particularity of Culture

In studying human diversity in time and space, anthropologists distinguish among the universal, the generalized, and the particular.

Certain biological, psychological, social, and cultural features are universal others are merely generalities and still some other traits are particularities

Universality

Dear learners, at this level, I am sure, you know well that as there are different societies in the world, there are different cultures. Amid the diversity, do not you think that we all human beings across the world have something in common. Don't you think Homo sapiens share something? What is cultural universality?

Universals are cultural traits that span across all cultures. Most are biological that distinguish us from other species – long period of infant dependency, year-round sexuality, complex brain that enables use of symbols and use of languages and tools. Social universals – life in groups – some kind of family organizes on social life and depends on social interactions for expression and continuation of the society. E.g. Incest taboo, exogamy (marriage outside one's group). Anthropologists would argue that it's just what we as humans do - we organize ourselves into families that are based on biology. No matter where you choose to travel and explore, you'll find a family system.

Because all humans face the same basic needs (such as for food, clothing, and shelter), we engage in similar activities that contribute to our survival. Anthropologist George Murdock (1945) compiled a list of over seventy cultural universals---customs and practices that occur across all societies. His categories included appearance (such as sports, dancing, games, joking, and visiting), social institutions (such as family, law, and religion), and customary practices (such as cooking, folklore, gift giving, and hospitality). These general customs and practices may be present in all cultures, but their specific forms vary from one group to another and from one time to another within the same group. For example, although telling jokes may be a universal practice, what is considered to be a joke in one society may be an insult in another (Kendall, 2005).

1) **Generality**

Generalities are cultural traits that occur in many societies but not in all societies. Societies can share same beliefs and customs borrowing, domination (colonial rule) when customs and procedures are imposed on one culture, or Independent innovation of same cultural trait e.g., farming, nuclear family, strict control over women's virginity, etc.

2) Particularity

Particularities are unique to certain cultural tradition. It is a culture trait not widespread. Cultural particulars include the specific practices that distinguish cultures form one another. These are cultural traditions which are unique to only few societies. They occur rarely. For example, homosexualism or lesbianism as a way of life, polyandrous marriage practice, eating of raw meat, etc. All people become hungry but the potential food sources defined as edible vary across cultures, i.e. what is appealing to eat in one society may be considered repulsive or simply unbelievable in another (for example donkey meat in Ethiopia).

3.5. Evaluating Cultural Differences: Ethnocentrism, Cultural Relativism & Human Rights

The concepts of ethnocentrism and cultural relativism occupy key position in anthropology.

Reflect your views on the following questions.

- Since your arrival to your college you have observed any events/activities. Would you please list down specific cultural differences you observed between university and home? Justify to your group members. Which event do you like and which one you don't like? Why?

A. Ethnocentrism

Ethnocentrism is the tendency to view one's own culture as superior to others and basis in judging the behavior and beliefs of people raised in other cultures. People everywhere think that their familiar explanations, opinions, and customs are true, right, proper, and moral. They regard different behavior as strange, immoral, or savage. Ethnocentrism refers to the tendency to see the behaviors, beliefs, values, and norms of one's own group as the only right way of living and to judge others by those standards.

Being fond of your own way of life and condescending or even being hostile toward other cultures is normal for all people. Because of ethnocentrism, we often operate

on the premise that our own society's ways are the correct, normal and better ways for acting, thinking, feeling and behaving. Our own group is the centre or axis of everything, and we scale and rate all others with reference to it. Ethnocentrism is not characteristic only of complex modern societies. People in small, relatively isolated societies are also ethnocentric in their views about outsiders. It is a cultural universal. Alien cultural traits are often viewed as being not just different but inferior, less sensible, and even "unnatural".

Ethnocentrism results in prejudices about people from other cultures and the rejection of their "alien ways." Our ethnocentrism can prevent us from understanding and appreciating another culture. When there is contact with people from other cultures, ethnocentrism can prevent open communication and result in misunderstanding and mistrust.

On the other hand, it is argued that small amount of ethnocentrism is important. By causing a rejection of the foods, customs, and perceptions of people in other cultures, it acts as a conservative force in preserving traditions of one's own culture. It can help maintain the separation and uniqueness of cultures. One can be ethnocentric about community, state, social class, or even race. In this regard, it contributes to social solidarity among people who share a cultural tradition.

B. Cultural relativism

We cannot grasp the behavior of other people if we interpret what they say and do in the light of our values, beliefs, and motives. Instead, we need to examine their behavior as insiders, seeing it within the framework of their values, beliefs and motives. The concept of cultural relativism states that as there are different societies, cultures also differ. Ideas, behaviors and acts will give 'right' meaning in the context of that specific culture. Otherwise, it might give 'wrong' meaning from the view point of people from other culture.

Cultural relativism suspends judgment and views about the behavior of people from the perspective of their own culture. Every society has its own culture, which is more or less unique. Every culture contains its own unique pattern of behavior which may seem alien to people from other cultural backgrounds. We cannot understand the practices and beliefs separately from the wider culture of which they are part. A culture has to be studied in terms of its own meanings and values. Cultural relativism

describes a situation where there is an attitude of respect for cultural differences rather than condemning other people's culture as uncivilized or backward.

To wind up, cultural relativism entails:

- Appreciating cultural diversity; accepting and respecting other cultures;
- Understanding one's own culture as only one among the many;
- Trying to understand every culture and its elements in terms of its own context and logic;
- Accepting that each body of custom has inherent dignity and meaning as the way of life of one group which has worked out to its environment, to the biological needs of its members, and to the group relationships; and
- Recognizing that what is immoral, ethical, and acceptable in one culture may not be so in another culture.

C. Human rights:

In today's world, human rights advocates challenge many of the tenets of cultural relativism. Many anthropologists are uncomfortable with the strong form of cultural relativism that suggests that all patterns of culture are equally valid. What if the people practice slavery, violence against women, torture, or genocide?

Human rights: rights based on justice and morality beyond and superior to particular countries, cultures, and religions. The idea of human rights challenges cultural relativism by invoking a realm of justice and morality beyond and superior to the laws and customs of particular countries, cultures, and religions.

Human rights include the right to speak freely, to hold religious beliefs without persecution, and to not be murdered, injured, or enslaved or imprisoned without charge. Such rights are seen as *inalienable* (nations cannot abridge or terminate them) and international (larger than and superior to individual nations and cultures). A doctrine of universal human rights, which emphasizes the rights of the individual over those of the community, would condemn such killings.

Anthropologists respect human diversity. Most ethnographers try to be objective, accurate, and sensitive in their accounts of other cultures. However, their objectivity, sensitivity and a cross-cultural perspective got nothing to do with ignoring international standards of justice and morality.

Go to the reference book "*Mirror for Humanity*" pages 50 - 52, suggested at the end of this unit and Reflect your views on the following questions.

- What ideas do you understand from the topics?
- Is ethnocentrism bad or good?
- Is cultural relativism bad or good?
- Why it is important to understand the concept of cultural relativism?
- What do you think about cultural relativism and human rights?

3.6 Culture Change

Dear student, culture changes in several ways; under this section we will discuss how and why cultures change and briefly review some of the widespread changes that have occurred in recent times. Thus, in order to learn more about culture change would you please respond the questions below before we go to the subsequent texts.

Reflect your views on the following question

- Why and how do cultures change?

When you examine the history of a society, it is obvious that its culture has changed over time. Some of the shared behaviors and ideas that were common at one time are modified or replaced at another time. That is why any anthropological account of the culture of any society is a type of snapshot view of one particular time. The anthropologists return several years after completing a cultural study; he or she

would not find exactly the same situation, for there are no cultures that remain completely static year after year.

Culture change can occur as a result of the following Mechanisms:

i. Diffusion The source of new cultural elements in a society may also be another society. The process by which cultural elements are borrowed from another society and incorporated into the culture of the recipient group is called diffusion.

- Diffusion is *direct* when two cultures trade with, intermarry among, or wage war on one another.
- Diffusion is *forced* when one culture subjugates another and imposes its customs on the dominated group.
- Diffusion is *indirect* when items or traits move from group A to group C via group B without any firsthand contact between A and C. In this case, group B might consist of traders or merchants who take products from a variety of places to new markets. Or group B might be geographically situated between A and C, so that what it gets from A eventually winds up in C, and vice versa. In today's world, much international diffusion is indirect-culture spread by the mass media and advanced information technology.

ii. Acculturation is the exchange of cultural features that results when groups have continuous first-hand contact.

The cultures of either or both groups may be changed by this contact. This usually happens in situations of trade or colonialism. In situations of continuous contact, cultures have also exchanged and blended foods, recipes, music, dances, clothing, tools, and technologies.

iii. Invention-the process by which humans innovate, creatively finding solutions to problems is a third mechanism of cultural change. Faced with comparable problems and challenges, people in different societies have innovated and changed in similar ways, which is one reason why cultural generalities exist. One example is the independent invention of agriculture in the Middle East and Mexico. Over the course of human history, major innovations have spread at the expense of earlier ones. Often a major invention, such as agriculture, triggers a series of subsequent interrelated changes. Thus in both Mexico and the Middle East, agriculture led to

many social, political, and legal changes, including notions of property and distinctions in wealth, class, and power.

vi. Globalization The term globalization encompasses a series of processes, including diffusion and acculturation, working to promote change in a world in which nations and people are increasingly interlinked and mutually dependent. Promoting such linkages are economic and political forces, as well as modem systems of transportation and communication. Due to globalization, long-distance communication is easier, faster, and cheaper than ever, and extends to remote areas. The mass media help propel a globally spreading culture of consumption. Within nations and across their borders, the media spread information about products, services, rights, institutions, lifestyles, and the perceived costs and benefits of globalization. Emigrants transmit information and resources transnationally, as they maintain their ties with home (phoning, faxing, e-mailing, making visits, and sending money). In a sense such people live multi-locally-in different places and cultures at once. They learn to play various social roles and to change behavior and identity depending on the situation.

3.7 Ties That Connect: Marriage, Family and Kinship

Reflect your views on the following question

- What comes to your mind when you think of marriage and the family?

Dear student, in one way or another we touched on the importance of culture and aspects of culture in our previous discussions. In this section, you will be introduced to the idea of how we, as social beings, organize ourselves and how the cultural rules governing our ties on marriage, family organization, residence patterns after marriage, forms of descent and descent groups, and other aspects of kinship.

3.7.1 Marriage

There is no one universally applicable definition of marriage, because the Cross Cultural Variability in the existence of rare forms of marriage in specific societies

renders such definitions invalid. A commonly quoted definition comes from Notes and Queries in anthropology**:**

“Marriage is a union between a man and a woman such that the children born to the woman are recognized as legitimate offspring of both partners” (Royal Anthropological Institute, 1951).

This definition isn’t universally valid for several reasons. One is that marriages may unite more than two spouses. Here we speak of plural marriages, as when a woman weds a group of brothers---an arrangement called fraternal polyandry that is characteristic of certain Himalayan cultures. Also, some societies, including the modern nations of Belgium and the Netherlands, recognize same sex marriages. Traditionally in Africa’s Sudan a Nuer woman could marry another woman if her father had only daughters but no male heirs, who are necessary if his patrilineage is to survive. He might ask his daughter to stand as a son in order to take a bride. This was a symbolic and social relationship rather than a sexual one. This woman’s ‘wife’ had sex with a man or men (whom her female ‘husband’ had to approve) until she got pregnant. The children born to the wife were accepted as the offspring of both husband and wife. Although the female husband was not the actual genitor, the biological father of the children, she was their pater, or socially recognized father (Kottak, 2005).

One interesting case is that the *Nayar of* Southern India did not have marriage in the conventional sense of the term. Although teenage Nayar girls took a ritual husband in a public ceremony, the husband took no responsibility for the woman after the ceremony, and frequently he never saw her again. Thus the Nayar do not have marriage according to our definition in that there is no economic cooperation, regulation of sexual activity, cohabitation, or expectation of permanency.

3.7.1.1 Rules of Marriage

Societies have rules that state whom one can and cannot marry. Every society known to anthropology has established for itself some type of rules regulating mating (sexual intercourse). The most common form of prohibition is mating with certain type of kin that are defined by the society as being inappropriate sexual partners. This prohibition on mating with certain categories of relatives is known as incest

taboo. The most universal form of incest taboo involves mating between members of the immediate (nuclear) family: mother-sons, father-daughters, and brother-sisters.

There are a few striking examples of marriage between members of the immediate family that violate the universality of the incest taboo. For political, religious, or economic reasons, members of the royal families among the ancient Egyptians, Incas and Hawaiians were permitted to mate with and marry their siblings, although this practice did not extend to the ordinary members of those societies.

Marriage is, therefore, a permanent legal union between a man and a woman. It is an important institution without which the society could never be sustained.

3.7.1.2 Mate Selection: Whom Should You Marry?

In a society one cannot marry anyone whom he or she likes. There are certain strict rules and regulations.

a) Exogamy

This is the rule by which a man is not allowed to marry someone from his own social group. Such prohibited union is designated as incest. Incest is often considered as sin. Different scholars had tried to find out the explanation behind this prohibition, i.e., how incest taboo came into operation.

In fact, there are some definite reasons for which practice of exogamy got approval. They are:

- A conception of blood relation prevails among the members of a group. Therefore, marriage within the group-members is considered a marriage between a brother and sister
- Attraction between a male and female gets lost due to close relationship in a small group.
- There is a popular idea that a great increase of energy and vigor is possible in the progeny if marriage binds two extremely distant persons who possess no kin relation among them.
- Kottak claimed also that exogamy has *adaptive value*, because it links people into a wider social network that nurtures, helps, and protects them

in times of need pushing social organization outward, establishing and preserving alliances among groups.

b) Endogamy

A rule of endogamy requires individuals to marry within their own group and forbids them to marry outside it. Religious groups such as the Amish, Mormons, Catholics, and Jews have rules of endogamy, though these are often violated when marriage takes place outside the group. Castes in India and Nepal are also endogamous. “Indeed, most cultures are endogamous units, although they usually do not need a formal rule requiring people to marry someone from their own society” (Kottak, 2017).

c) Preferential Cousin Marriage:

A common form of preferred marriage is called preferential cousin marriage and is practiced in one form or another in most of the major regions of the world. Kinship systems based on lineages distinguish between two different types of first cousins, these are:

Cross Cousins: are children of siblings of the opposite sex- that is one’s mother’s brothers’ children and one’s father’s sisters’ children.

The most common form of preferential cousin marriage is between cross cousins because it functions to strengthen and maintain ties between kin groups established by the marriages that took place in the preceding generation.

Parallel Cousins: When marriage takes place between the children of the siblings of the same sex, it is called parallel cousin marriage. Children of siblings of the same sex, namely the children of one’s mother’s sister and one’s father brother. The mate may come either from one’s father’s brother’s children or mother's sister’s children.

A much less common form of cousin marriage is between parallel cousins, the child of one’s mother’s sister or father’s brother. Found among some Arabic societies in North Africa, it involves the marriage of a man to his father’s brother’s daughter. Since parallel cousins belong to the same family, such a practice can serve to prevent the fragmentation of family property.

d) The Levirate and Sororate

Another form of mate selection that tends to limit individual choice are those that require a person to marry the husband or widow of a deceased kin.

The levirate- is the custom whereby a widow is expected to marry the brother (or some close male relative) of her dead husband. Usually any children fathered by the woman's new husband are considered to belong legally to the dead brother rather than to the actual genitor. Such a custom both serves as a form of social security for the widow and her children and preserved the rights of her husband's family to her sexuality and future children.

The sororate, which comes into play when a wife dies, is the practice of a widower's marrying the sister (or some close female relative) of his deceased wife. In the event that the deceased spouse has no sibling, the family of the deceased is under a general obligation to supply some equivalent relative as a substitute. For example, in a society that practice sororate, a widower may be given as a substitute wife the daughter of his deceased wife's brother.

3.7.1.3. Number of spouses

Societies have rules regulating whom one may/may not marry; they have rules specifying how many mates a person may/should have.

- ***Monogamy***: the marriage of one man to one woman at a time.
- Polygamy, i.e., marriage of a man or woman with two or more mates. Polygamy can be of two types:
  - ✓ ***Polygyny***: the marriage of a man to two or more women at a time.
  - ✓ ***Polyandy:*** the marraige of a woman to two or more men at a time
  - ✓ Marriage of a man with two or more sisters at a time is called **sororal polygyny**. When the co-wives are not sisters, the marriage is termed as non-sororal polygyny. Polyandry is practiced in only a few societies, notably among certain groups in Tibet, Nepal, and India. Polygyny is much more common.

In contemporary North America, where divorce is fairly easy and common, polygamy (marriage to more than one spouse at the same time) is against the law. Marriage in industrial nations joins individuals, and relationships between individuals can be served more easily than can those between groups. As divorce grows more

common, North Americans practice serial monogamy, that is, individuals having more than one spouse but never legally at the same time.

According to Leach, Marriage can, but doesn't always, accomplish the following (Kottak, 2002):

(1) Tallish the legal father of a woman's children and the legal mother of a man's.

(2) Give either of both spouses' rights to the labor of the other.

(3) Give either or both spouses a monopoly in the sexuality of the other.

(4) Give either or both spouses rights over the other's property

(5) Establish a joint fund of property a partnership for the benefit of the children

(6) Establish a socially significant relationship.

3.7.1.4 Economic Consideration of Marriage

Most societies view as a binding contract between at least the husband and wife and, in many cases, between their respective families as well. Such a contract includes the transfer of certain rights between the parties involved: rights of sexual access, legal rights to children, and rights of the spouses to each other's economic goods and services. Often the transfer of rights is accompanied by the transfer of some type of economic consideration. These transactions, which may take place either before or after the marriage can be divided into four categories: 1) Bride wealth 2) Dowry 3) Bride Service, and 4) Reciprocal exchange

1. Bride wealth: It is the compensation given upon marriage by the family of the groom to the family of the bride. According to Murdock (1967), in Africa it was estimated that 82% of the societies require the payment of bride wealth. In many African societies, cattle constitute bride wealth, but the number of cattle given varies from society to society. As the value of bride wealth increases, marriage becomes more stable.

Anthropologists identified a number of important functions that the institutions of bride wealth performed for the well-being of the society. For example, bride wealth has been seen:-as security or insurance for the good treatment of the wife: as

mechanism to stabilize marriage by reducing the possibility of divorce: as a form of compensation to the bride's lineage for the loss of her economic potential and childbearing capacity: and as a symbol of the union between two large groups of kin.

2. Dowry: A dowry involves a transfer of goods or money in the opposite direction, from the bride's family to the groom's family. Dowry, best known in India but also practiced in Europe, correlates with lower female status. Women are perceived as burdens. When husbands and their families take a wife, they expect to be compensated for the added responsibility**.** Bride wealth exists in many more cultures than dowry does, but the nature and quantity of transferred items differ.

3. Bride Service: In societies with considerable material wealth, marriage considerations take the form of bride wealth paid in various forms of commodities. But because many small scale societies cannot accumulate capital goods, men often give their labor to the bride's family instead of material goods in exchange for wives. This practice, known as bride service, is found in approximately 14 percent of societies listed in Murdock's world ethnographic sample (Ferraro, 2006).

When the groom works for his wife's family, this is known as bride service. Bride service was also practiced by the Yanomamo, a people living in the low- lands of Venezuela. During this time, the groom lives with the bride's parents and hunts for them.

4. Reciprocal Exchange: Reciprocal exchange is found in approximately 6 percent of the societies listed in Murdock's Ethnographic Atlas, more prominently in the pacific region and among traditional Native Americans. It involves the roughly equal exchange of gifts between the families of both the bride and the groom. Such a castom was practiced by the traditional Vugusu people of western Kenya, who exchanged a large variety of items between a sizable numbers of people from both families.

3.7.1.5 Post-Marital Residence

Where the newly married couple lives after the marriage ritual is governed by cultural rules, which are referred to as post-marital residence rule.

- **Patrilocal Residence**: the married couple lives with or near the relatives of the husband's father (69% of the societies).

- **Matrilocal Residence**: the married couple lives with or near the relatives of the wife (13 percent of societies).
- **Avunculocal Residence**: The married couple lives with or near the husband's mother's brother (4 percent of societies).
- **Ambilocal (Bilocal)** Residence: The married couple has a choice of living with relatives of the wife or relatives of the husband(9 percent societies)
- **Neolocal Residence**: The Married couple forms an independent place of residence away from the relatives of either spouse (5 percent societies).

Reflect your views on the following issue

- Please take 15 minutes and write the major types of marriage and a kind of residential place a married couple will take in your locality. And share it with your classmates.

3.7.2 Family

Family is the basis of human society. It is the most important primary group in society. The family, as an institution, is universal. It is the most permanent and most pervasive of all social institutions. The interpersonal relationships within the family make the family an endurable social unit.

Cultural anthropologists have identified two fundamentally different types of family structure--the nuclear family and the extended family.

1. The Nuclear Family: Consisting of a married couple and their dependent children. It is typically of the middle class but is by no means the only type of family found in western world and urban developing countries. This family is well separated from other relatives, visiting only occasionally if at all. "Even though the nuclear family, to some degree, is part of a larger family structure, it remains relatively autonomous and independent unit. That is, the everyday needs of economic support, childcare, and social interaction are met within the nuclear family itself rather than by a wider set of relatives" (Ferraro, 2006).

The Nuclear family is most likely to be found in societies with greatest amount of geographic mobility. This certainly is the case in the United States and Canada, which currently have both considerable geographic mobility and the ideal of the nuclear family. In any society every adult individual belongs to two different nuclear

families. The family in which he was born and reared is called ‘family of orientation’. The other family to which he establishes relation through marriage is called ‘family of procreation’.

2. The Extended Family

Extended families consist of two or more nuclear families that are linked by blood ties. Most commonly, this takes the form of a married couple living with one or more of their married children in a single household or homestead and under the authority of a family head(Ferraro, 2006).

In the case of a patrilineal extended family, the young couple takes up residence in the homestead of the husband’s father, and the husband continues to work for his father, who also runs the household. Moreover, most of the personal property in the household is not owned by the newlyweds, but is controlled by the husbands’ father.

It is important to point out that in extended family systems; marriage is viewed more as bringing a daughter into the family than acquiring a wife. In other words, a man’s obligations of obedience to his father and loyalty to his brothers are far more important than his relationship to his wife. When a woman marries into an extended family, she most often comes under the control of her mother-in-law, who allocates chores and supervises her domestic activities. As a geographical mobility is more likely associated with nuclear family than with extended family, there is a rough correlation found between extended family system and an agricultural way of life.

According to Murdock’s Ethnographic Atlas (1967), approximately 46 percent of the 862 societies listed have some type of extended family organization.

3.7.2.1 Functions of Marriage and Family

Family performs certain specific functions which can be summarized as follows:

1. **Biological Function**: The institution of marriage and family serves biological (sexual and reproductive) function. The institution of marriage regulates and socially validates long term, sexual relations between males and females. Thus, husband-wife relationship come into existence and become a socially approved means to control sexual relation and a socially approved basis of the family. Sexual cohabitation between spouses automatically leads to the

birth of off-springs. The task of perpetuating the population of a society is an important function of a family. Society reproduces itself through family.

2. **Economic Function**: Marriage brings economic co-operation between men and women and ensures survival of individuals in a society. With the birth of off-springs, the division of labor based on sex and generation come into play. In small scale societies, family is a self-contained economic unit of production, consumption and distribution.
3. **Social Function**: Marriage is based on the desire to perpetuate one's family line. In marriage, one adds not only a spouse but most of the spouse's relatives to one's own group of kin. This means the institution of marriage brings with it the creation and perpetuation of the family, the form of person to person relations and linking one's kin group to another kin group.
4. **Educational and Socialization Function**: The burden of socialization via the processes of enculturation and education of new born infants fall primarily upon the family. In addition, children learn an immense amount of knowledge, culture, values prescribed by society, before they assume their place as adult members of a society. The task of educating and enculturating children is distributed among parents. Moreover, family behaves as an effective agent in the transmission of social heritage.

3.7.3 Kinship

Kinship is social relations based on culturally recognized ties of descent and marriage. It is the method of reckoning relationship. It is a feature of all human societies. The reason for this universality is to some extent biological. Human infants are helpless and dependent on the care of others for a prolonged period, and bonds arise among people in relation to these conditions. But while biology provides the basis for kinship, the ways in which people define and use kinship are determined by sociocultural considerations, not biological ones. When anthropologists study kinship, they are concerned with social relations and cultural definitions. Rather than being universal, these vary widely indifferent societies; people with the same biological or martial relationship may be defined differently, labelled differently, and classified variously as kin or non-kin.

In sum, kinship is defined as the network in which people are related to one another through blood, marriage and other ties. It is a kind of social relationship that ties people. Kinship is universally found in all societies, and it can be created through three ways: blood, marriage, and through adoption/fostering / good- parenthood. The relationship based on blood ties is called “consanguineous kinship”, and the relatives of this kind are called ‘consanguineous kin’. The desire for reproduction gives rise to another kind of binding relationship. “This kind of bond, which arises out of a socially or legally defined marital relationship, is called affinal relationship”, and the relatives so related are called ‘affinal kin’. And, the other one is through adoption. This is called the principle of fictitious kinship.

3.7.4 Descent

A descent group is a permanent social unit whose members claim common ancestry. Decent group members believe they all descended from those common ancestors. The group endures even though its membership changes, as members are born and die, move in and move out. Often, decent group membership is determined at birth and is life-long. In this case it is an ascribed status (Kottack, 2005).

Descent refers to the social recognition of the biological relationship that exists between the individuals. The rule of descent refers to a set of principles by which an individual traces his descent. In almost all societies kinship connections are very significant. An individual always possesses certain obligations towards his kinsmen and he also expects the same from his kinsmen. Succession and inheritance are related to this rule of descent. There are three important rules of decent:

1. **Patrilineal descent**

When descent is traced solely through the male line, it is called patrilineal descent. A man’s sons and daughters all belong to the same descent group by birth, but it is only the sons who continue the affiliation. Succession and inheritance pass through the male line.

2. Matrilineal descent

When the descent is traced solely through the female line, it is called matrilineal descent. At birth, children of both sexes belong to mother’s descent group, but later

only females acquire the succession and inheritance. Therefore, daughters carry the tradition, generation after generation.

3. Cognatic Descent

In some societies individuals are free to show their genealogical links either through men or women. Some people of such a society are therefore connected with the kin-group of father and others with the kin group of mothers. There is no fixed rule to trace the succession and inheritance; any combination of lineal link is possible in such societies.

Reflect your views on the following questions

- How do families and marriage differ in different societies?
- What do you see as the main differences between nuclear and extended families?
- Origin and evolution of human beings?

3.8 Culture areas and culture contact

Culture area refers to a cluster of related cultures occupying a certain geographical region. In anthropology the concept of culture area has been used beginning from the 1920s where Afred Kroeber and his contemporaries were interested in examining the concentration of cultural trains in a given geographic area.

In the context of Ethiopia, we may come up with different culture are in relation to subsistence. These are plough culture, *Enset* culture area, and pastoral societies' culture area.

A. Plough culture area

Plough culture area represents those parts of the country where agriculture is predominantly the means by which subsistence is eked out. Most of highland and central parts of the country serves as the backbone of the economy is considered a plough culture. The area often called plough culture has been a subject of anthropological inquires over the past seven decades starting from the 1950s. Some of the ethnographers who studied the area that we call plough culture are Donald Levine, Allen Hobben, Fredrick Gamst and Jack Bauer.

B. *Enset* culture area

Enset culture area, on the other hand, covers a vast region in the southern part of country. *Enset* cultivating regions of the present day SNNPRS such as the Guraghe, Sidama and Gedeo areas constitute *enset* culture area. In this region, *enset* serves as a staple diet to the people who make use the plant in a wide variety of forms for a living.

C. Pastoral culture area

Pastoral culture area is found in the low land areas covering a large section of the Afar in the northwest, Somali in the southeast and Borena of southern of Ethiopia. As opposed ot the above the cases, inhabitants of the pastoral culture area rely significantly on their herds and cattle for a living. Mobility of people and herds is a major characteristic feature of the people occupying the pastoral culture area.

Reflect your views on the following question

- Search for anthropological findings/studies in your library focusing on plough culture, *enset* culture and pastoral culture areas in Ethiopia. Summarize the finding of scholars in a group of five students and present the result of you work in class to your instructor and students.
- How do you explain the pattern of historical interaction between the different culture areas of the country discussed in this unit?
- What other culture areas can identify in the country in addition to the above three types?

3.9 Unit Summary

Dear Students!

In this unit, we have treated the central concept of anthropology which is culture. Culture consists of the things people make, their behavior, their beliefs and ideas. Using a comparative perspective, anthropology examines biological, psychological, social, and cultural universals and generalities. There are also unique and distinctive aspects of the human condition. The belief that one's own culture represents the best way to do things is known as ethnocentrism. Cultural relativism is the idea that

each culture is unique and distinctive, but that no one culture is superior. We have also underscored that culture is always changing. Mechanisms of cultural change include diffusion, acculturation, and independent invention. In addition, globalization describes a series of processes that promote change in our world in which nations and people are increasingly interlinked and mutually dependent.

The other important topic of our discussion in this unit has concentrated on ties that unite such as family, marriage and kinship. The incest taboo and marriage prohibitions compel individuals to marry outside the family. Societies have rules regarding number of spouses and post-marital residence rules, which result in the creation of a variety of types of families. Societies also have rules regarding how marriage is contracted Different types of marriage rules result in different structures of relationship or alliance between descent groups. Kinship terminology in different societies reflects the pattern of descent, family type, and marriage found in those societies.

Suggested Reading Materials

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UNIT FOUR

MARGINALIZED, MINORITIES, AND VULNERABLE GROUPS

Dear Students!

Welcome to Unit Four. In the previous unit we have dealt with basic points including definitions of culture, main features and elements of culture, and culture change and continuity. In addition to learning about cultural diversity of human societies, we have discussed issues related culture areas, culture contact and cross-cultural similarities considering the Ethiopian setting. Unit Four focuses on issues of marginalization and vulnerability. It specifically deals with different forms of marginalization affecting the rights and wellbeing of minority occupational groups, women, children, and older people, religious and ethnic minorities. It also discusses the human right approaches and the notion of inclusiveness. To benefit from the teaching and learning activities, students are expected to assume an active role in class activities and discussions, engage in group work to develop collective learning and individual learning activities to develop independent learning skills.

Contents of the Unit

- Concepts related to marginalization
- Gender-based vulnerability and marginalization (girls and women)
- Age-based vulnerability and marginalization (children and older persons)
- Marginalization of minority occupational groups
- Marginalization of religious and ethnic minorities
- Inclusiveness and the human rights approach

Unit Learning Outcomes

Up on the successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

- define concepts related to marginalization
- identify forms of marginalization affecting different social groups and occupational minorities
- analyze the major causes and manifestations of marginalization
- discuss the notion of inclusiveness and the human rights approach to protect vulnerable and minority groups
- Suggest viable ways of promoting inclusive approaches and protecting marginalized and vulnerable groups.

As noted at the outset, in this unit, we will discuss issues related to marginalized, minority and vulnerable groups focusing on global and Ethiopia settings. The unit specifically focuses on marginalization of women, children (especially young girls), and occupational, religious and ethnic minorities. Let us begin with definition of some concepts.

4.1 Definition of concepts

What is marginalization?

Marginalization is defined as a treatment of a person or social group as minor, insignificant or peripheral. Marginalization involves exclusion of certain groups from social interactions such as marriage relations, sharing food and drinks, and working and living together. For example, minority occupational groups (e.g., potters and tanners) are not allowed to be members of community-based associations (e.g., Iddirs) in some parts of Ethiopia. In some cultural settings, marginalization involves excluding certain groups from basic economic rights including rights to property ownership, and rights to be engaged in certain economic activities of jobs.

Who are mostly marginalized?

Marginalization affects certain social groups in a given community or society. The targets of marginalization may vary from society to society. Women, children, older people, and people with disabilities are among marginalized groups across the

world. The nature and level of marginalization varies from society to society as a result of cultural diversity. Religious, ethnic, and racial minorities are also among social groups affected by marginalization in different societies and cultures. Minority occupational groups such as crafts-workers are targets of marginalization in some cultural contexts. For example, occupational minorities such as tanners, potters, and ironsmiths are marginalized in Ethiopia.

What is vulnerability?

Vulnerability refers to the state of being exposed to physical or emotional injuries. Vulnerable groups are people exposed to possibilities of attack, harms or mistreatment. The impacts of attacks and harms are not limited to physical damages. They could also lead to long-term problems including emotional disorder (e.g., psychological trauma) and social or relational problems. For example, girls and women are vulnerable to gender-based violence such as harassment, rape, and forced marriage. Young girls are exposed to child/early marriage (including marriage before the age of 15) in some parts of Ethiopia. Child marriage would lead to adolescent or teenage pregnancy. Teenage pregnancy in turn leads to a severe reproductive health problems such as fistula. In addition to physical damage and psychological disorder, women with fistula suffer from isolation from social interactions. .

Vulnerable persons/groups need special attention, protection and support. For example, children (especially child girls) must be protected from harmful practices such as child marriage and genital cutting. Older-persons and people with disabilities also need special support and protection as they are exposed to risks and neglect because of their age and disabilities. Universities and other educational institutions have introduced special education programs for students with disabilities to help them learn better.

Minority groups

The phrase ‘minority group’ refers to a small group of people within a community, region, or country. In most cases, minority groups are different from the majority population in terms of race, religion, ethnicity, and language. For example, blacks are minorities in the United States of America. Christians would be minorities in a

Muslim majority country. Muslims would be minorities in a predominantly Christian society. Hence, minority groups can be ethnic minorities, religious minorities, or racial minorities in a given community, region or country. There are different forms of marginalization. In this unit we will discuss forms of marginalization that violate the rights and wellbeing of girls and women, older persons, and minority social groups. We will discuss gender-based marginalization in the following section. First, reflect your views on the questions listed below. .

Reflect on the following questions

- What kind of marginalization do you observe in your social environment?
- Who are the most marginalized groups?
- What are the major causes for the marginalization of those groups of people?
- What are the manifestations of the marginalization?

4.2 Gender-based marginalization

Sex and gender

In order to understand the meaning of gender, we need to discuss the difference between these two concepts: *sex* and *gender*. Sex differences between female and male human beings are closely associated with biological differences. This means that women and men are genetically (e.g., variation in types of chromosomes and hormones) different. Biological differences between women and men are expressed in terms of hormonal and physiological differences. The main sexual differences between men and women include the following:

- *Primary differences*: contrasts in sexual and reproductive organs (e, g., only women can get pregnant, give birth and nurture newborn)
- *Secondary differences*: contrasts in breasts, type of voice, and distribution of hair; and

- *Other variations*: differences in height (men tend to be taller), weight (men tend to weigh more), and physical strength (Kottak 2005).

Reflect on the following questions

- What are the effects of the above mentioned biological differences between women and men?
- Examine the effects of primary differences, secondary differences, and other physical differences listed above.

The concept gender has a difference meaning. The meaning of gender is closely related to socially/culturally constructed characteristics of females/women and males/men. Gender differences are expressed in gender roles (i.e., behaviors expected from females and males in a given cultural setting. Gender roles are tasks and activities a culture assigns to men and women (Kottak 2005). For example, based on traditional roles of male and female roles, men are expected to be leaders, assertive, and ambitious. Women are expected to be passive, caring (helpful), and nurturing. This includes gender division of labor observed in many cultures. For example, in many African societies, especially in rural areas, women's roles are dominated by indoor activities including child care and home management. Men's roles include working outdoors, travelling to distant areas as hunters, traders, and warriors.

Gender-based marginalization is closely related to gender inequality. Gender stereotypes play an important role in encouraging unequal treatment of men and women. Gender stereotypes refer to strongly held views about the characteristics of males and females. Gender inequality involves discrimination on a group of people based on their gender. Gender inequality mainly arises from cultural values, norms, and beliefs rather than biological differences between women and men. The manifestations of gender inequality varied from culture to culture. Girls and women face some level of marginalization and negative discrimination in most societies

across the world. As a result, women are exposed to social and economic inequalities involving unfair distribution of wealth, income, job opportunities, and political power.

Gender-based marginalization is a global problem. It involves exclusion of girls and women from a wide range of opportunities and social services. Gender disparities in education are good examples. Girls in developing countries, especially those who live in remote and rural areas, face challenges to pursue formal education. For example, the enrollment of girls in higher education is much lower than that of boys in most African countries. Moreover, women do not enjoy equal employment opportunities. Women do not have equal property rights in many cultures in Ethiopia. For example, they are excluded from the right to own and inherit key family resources such as land. Women and girls are also vulnerable to gender-based violence such as rape, child marriage, forced marriage, domestic violence and female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C).

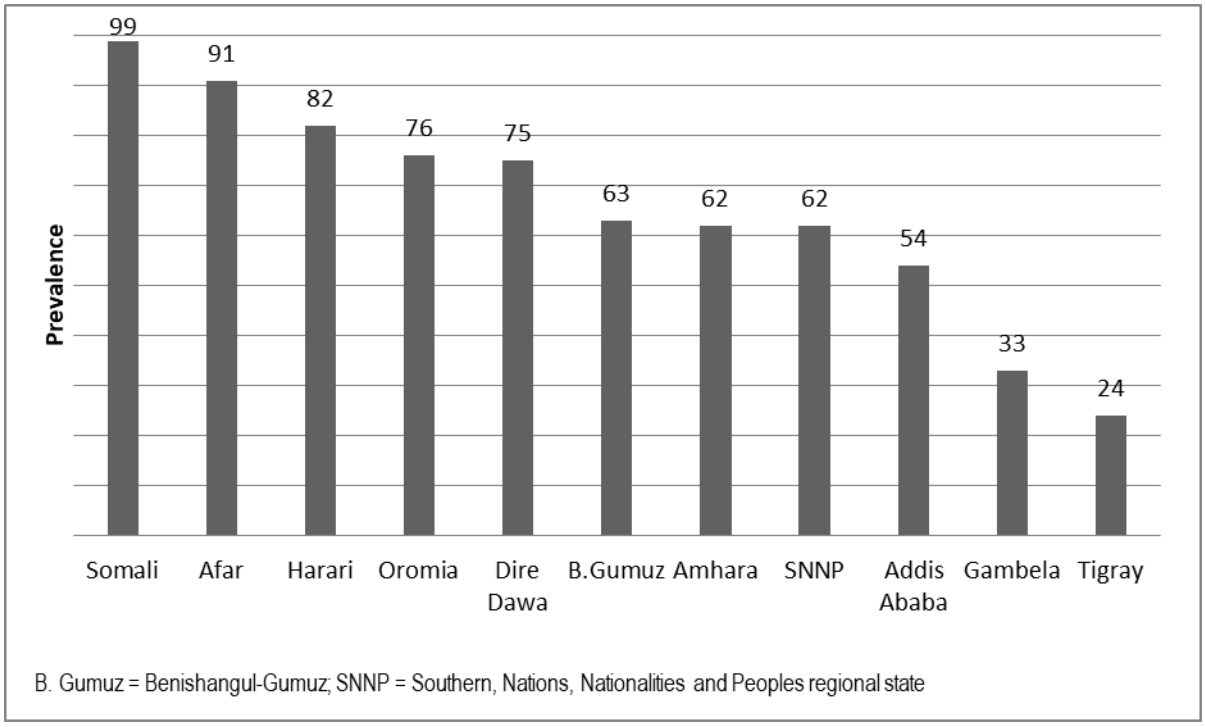
There are some customary practices that affect the health and wellbeing of girls and women. Collectively, these practices are called harmful traditional practices (HTPs). We will discuss two examples: female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) and child marriage in this unit. Child marriage will be discussed under age-based marginalization. Let us begin with female genital mutilation/cutting, which is widely practiced in most regions of Ethiopia.

Female genital mutilation/cutting

Female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) is regarded as a form of gender-based violence. According to sources, more than 200 million women and girls alive today have undergone FGM/C. Moreover, more than 3 million girls are at risk of FGM/C every year (Shell-Duncan, Naik, & Feldman-Jacobs 2016). FGM/C is practiced in 28 countries in Africa. The prevalence of the practice is very high in some countries. For example, the prevalence of FGM/C among women aged 15-49 years in some African countries was very high. It was 98% in Somalia, 93% in Djibouti, 87% in Egypt and Sudan, and 83% in Eritrea. Nigeria (25%), Senegal (24%), and Kenya (21%) have a relatively low prevalence of FGM/C (UNFPA & UNICEF, 2017).

The prevalence of FGM/C in Ethiopia is lower than the prevalence of the practice in countries such as Somalia but higher than the prevalence in Kenya and Senegal. Around 65% of girls and women in the 15 to 49 years age category are circumcised in Ethiopia (UNFPA & UNICEF, 2017). FGM/C is practiced in most of the regions in Ethiopia including Oromia, Amhara, Tigray, and Somali regions. The prevalence of FGM/C is very high in the following regions: Somali (99%), Afar (91%), Harai (82%), and Oromia (76%). Tigray (24%) and Gambela (33%) exhibit low FGM/C prevalence. According to the sources, the prevalence of FGM/C in girls and women aged 15-49 years has been declining from 80% in 2005 to 65% in 2016. The prevalence of the practice has been declining significantly among girls under 15 years (CSA & ICF 2016). The following figure shows the prevalence of FGM/C in different regions of Ethiopia based on the findings of the 2016 Ethiopian Demographic and Health Survey.

Figure: Prevalence of FGM/C among women aged 15-49 years in Ethiopia by region



Source: CSA & ICF 2016

The age of girls undergone FGM/C varies across regions and cultures in Ethiopia. FGM/C is performed shortly after birth in Amhara, Tigray and Afar regions as well as in northern parts of Oromia. In southern Ethiopia, FGM/C is practiced when girls are approaching the age of marriage. It is practices mostly as a rite of passage and preparation for marriage. In most cases, the practice could lead to severe bleeding and infections. This is because FGM/C is performed by traditional practitioners who do not have medical training and equipment.

Key drivers of FGM/C

Different factors support the continuation of FGM/C. The major factors include maintenance of cleanliness, preservation of virginity, discouraging promiscuity, increasing marriageability, enhancement of fertility, improvement of male sexual satisfaction, social acceptance, fear of marginalization, and compliance with tradition and religious requirements. Let us see some of the major factors (e.g., beliefs, values, and norms) that support the continuation of FGM/C.

1. Belief in impurity

FGM/C-related marginalization is enforced by norms and taboos (strongly cherished social norms) embedded in indigenous belief systems. The concept taboo is defined as ‘a ritually sanctioned prohibition against contact with things, a person or an activity’. Things or persons subject to taboo are regarded as sacred or impure. There is a belief that breaching of a taboo has implications including pollution and supernatural sanctions (Buckser, 1997). A recent ethnographic study reveals that taboos are the major drivers of FGM/C in some cultural settings in southern Ethiopia. In some societies uncut/uncircumcised women are considered impure. They are also regarded as polluting to others including men having sex with them. As a result, marriage and casual sexual contact with an uncut woman is regarded as breaking of taboo. Breaking such taboos, according indigenous beliefs, would have two major implications: 1) it pollutes the transgressor (in this case the man who married uncut girl/woman); and 2) the pollution would be followed by misfortunes. According to the local belief, a man who marries an uncut woman would be exposed to misfortunes such as health problems, infertility, and diminishing farm yield and family wealth (Getaneh 2016).

The belief related to purity and impurity has a wide range of implications. First, uncircumcised girls are considered as impure. Second, they pollute men who have sex with them. Third, marriage to uncircumcised girls would bring about misfortunes (e.g., illness, infertility, conflict, death). As a result of this belief, men avoid marriage relationship with uncircumcised girls. Hence, according to cultural beliefs, girls must be circumcised to be clean and ready for marriage.

2. Discouraging promiscuity

The term promiscuous has the following dictionary definition. It refers to a person who has a lot of different sexual partners or sexual relationships. In societies where FGM/C is a social norm, there is a belief that uncircumcised girls have high or extraordinary sexual desire. As the result, uncut girls/women are considered as promiscuous. According to such beliefs, uncut women, including uncut married women, would have sexual relationship with multiple partners. This, in turn, would affect marriage stability and increases the rate of divorce. In many cultures, FGM/C is practiced to reduce the sexual desire of girls and women.

3. Preserving virginity

In many Ethiopian cultures, social norms prohibit premarital sex and pregnancy. The value attached to virginity is very strong in order to discourage premarital sex. In some parts of Ethiopia child girls (girls before the age of 18, sometimes before the age of 15) get married to avoid the possibility of premarital sex. Girl's reputation and family social status are associated with sexual purity (virginity) of girls. FGM/C helps preserving girls' virginity, which is considered as a precondition for marriage in many cultures. For example, Type III FGM/C (also called infibulation) is practiced to prevent girls from premarital sex until they get married.

4. Fear of ill-manner

There is a wide spread belief that uncircumcised girls would be disobedient, powerful and ill-mannered. Hence, FGM/C is practiced as a means of moderating the behavior of girls and women.

5. Social sanctions

Social sanctions are used to control the behavior of members of a given society or community. Avoiding FGM/C is considered as violation of social norms in FGM/C practicing societies. Hence, parents and girls abandoning FGM/C will be punished through social sanctions including isolation from the community. Parents of girls let their daughter undergo the practice mainly because of an overwhelming fear that their daughter and the entire family will be marginalized if they refuse to comply with social norms related to FGM/C. In many cultures, a girl who has not been cut is often ridiculed, insulted and driven out of her community. They will also have a little chance of marriage within the community.

Negative impacts of FGM/C

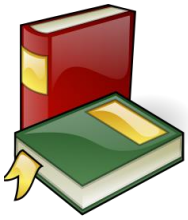
As noted earlier, FGM/C is considered as violation of the rights of girls and women. The practice also has negative implications for the health, social and psychological wellbeing of girls and women. The following are some of the negative impacts of the practice: severe bleeding during and after the practice, different forms of infections, pain during sexual intercourse, and complications during child delivery. The practice could also lead to emotional disorder and psychological trauma.

4.3 Marginalized occupational groups

According to anthropological findings, there are occupational minorities marginalized from other groups in many parts of Ethiopia. The most marginalized occupational groups are tanners, potters, weavers and ironsmiths. Craft-workers such as potters and tanners are considered as impure. As a result, they are excluded from social interactions, ownership of economic resources (e.g., land), economic activities such as farming, and participation in community-based associations and certain cultural celebrations.

The above mentioned minority occupational groups are marginalized despite their contributions to their respective communities. Craft-workers fulfill the demands of their respective communities by producing articles such as traditional hand-woven clothes, household utensils, and farm tools. Despite their important contributions, however, they are marginalized by the dominant and majority groups. For examples, weavers produce cultural clothes highly demanded by thousands and millions of

people. Many people use cultural clothes during annual celebrations, religious holidays, weddings, culture days, and mourning. The demand of cultural dresses has been increasing in Ethiopia in the last three decades. People dress cultural clothes in different occasions such as cultural festivals and religious celebrations. Despite their contributions, weavers are marginalized from the wider society in many parts of Ethiopia.



Reading

A book edited by Dena Freeman and Alula Pankhurst (2001) is an important reading material on marginalized occupational groups in Ethiopia. The title of the book is '*Marginalized Minorities of Craft-workers and Hunters in Southern Ethiopia'.* The book focuses on marginalized occupational groups in 14 ethnic/cultural groups including the Gurage, Kambata, Kafa, Dawro, Gamo, Sidama and Konso. Read chapters from the book and discuss some of the issues among your classmates or during class discussion.

Ironsmiths are among occupational groups marginalized in many cultural setting in Ethiopia. Ironsmiths make and repair iron articles without using machines. They contribute a lot especially in rural areas. Ironsmiths serve rural communities by producing farming tools such as plough shares, sickles, and hoes. Most rural families in Ethiopia widely use household utensils (e.g., knives and axes) made by ironsmiths. Tanners make leather products that serve community members. Potters produce pottery articles essential for food processing and serving, brewing traditional beer and fetching water. Despite their contributions, these craft-workers are considered inferior and marginalized from wide areas of social interactions and economic activities.

Craft-workers such as potters and weavers have big contributions to their respective communities; however, they are excluded and mistreated by the majority groups.

- What do you think the reason for the marginalization of these occupational groups?
- What is the impact of this practice to the development of the

crafts industry in Ethiopia?

- What solution do you suggest to eradicate the marginalization of crafts workers and protect their rights?

Write your answer and read it in the class.

Marginalization of despised occupational groups is manifested in many ways in different parts of Ethiopia. Dena Freeman and Alula Pankhurst (2001), well-known anthropologists, identified different forms of marginalization targeting minority occupational groups. Some of them are summarized in the following table.

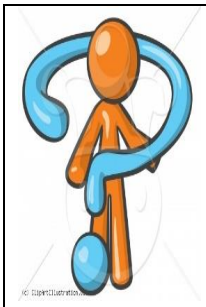
Table: Types and manifestations of marginalization of craft-workers

Type of marginalization	Manifestations of marginalization
Spatial marginalization	☙ Craft-workers settle/live on the outskirts of villages, near to forests, on poor land, around steep slopes. ☙ They are segregated at market places (they sell their goods at the outskirts of markets). ☙ When they walk along the road, they are expected to give way for members of the dominant group and walk on the lower side of the road.
Economic marginalization	☙ Craft-workers are excluded from certain economic activities including production and exchanges. In some cultures they are not allowed to plow the land and cultivate crops. ☙ They have a limited access to land and land ownership. In some rural societies, they are completely excluded from ownership of farm land.
Social marginalization	☙ Craft-workers are excluded from intermarriage (i.e., marriage with members of the dominant group). As a result, they exercise endogamous marriage. ☙ Craft workers do not share burial places with others; they are excluded from membership of associations such as iddirs. ☙ When marginalized groups are allowed to participate in social events, they must sit on the floor separately-sometimes outside the house or near the door.
Cultural marginalization	Cultural marginalization is manifested in negative stereotyping such as the following: ☙ Occupational minorities are labeled as impure and polluting;

	they are accused of eating animals that have died without being slaughtered; ☙ Occupational minorities are also considered unreliable, lacking morality, respect and shame.

Source: Dena Freeman and Alula Pankhurst (2001)

The above table summarizes forms of marginalization targeting occupational minorities such as potters, tanners, and ironsmiths. Manifestations of marginalization outlined above illustrate the level of discrimination against craft-workers. These are examples. You may find other forms of marginalization when you read the literature on this issue. There are different arguments related to this issue. Read the questions listed in the following box and discuss them with your classmates.



The marginalization of craft-workers is an issue of human rights. Provide your critical reflection on the following questions.

- ☙ How do you evaluate the negative stereotypes against craft-workers?
- ☙ What are the short and long-term impacts of such stereotypes targeting occupation minorities?
- ☙ Some people argue that marginalization of craft-workers is one of the factors that hinders the development of craftworks and small scale manufacturing in Ethiopia. Do you agree? If you do what are your reasons?

4.4 Age-based vulnerability

What is age-based vulnerability? Age-based vulnerability is susceptibility of people, especially children and older people, to different forms of attack, physical injuries and emotional harms. For example, children and older people (people aged 60 and above) are exposed to various forms of attack, harm and mistreatment because of their age. As a result, vulnerable persons/groups need special attention, protection

and support. In this section, we will discuss some example related to children and older people.

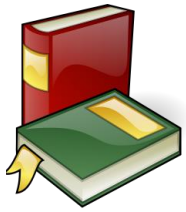
4.4.1 Children: Discrimination and vulnerability

Children are among vulnerable groups exposed to harm because of their age. Both boys and girls are exposed to some harm and abuse in the hands of older people. However, younger girls are exposed to double marginalization and discrimination because of the gender and age. Child girls are exposed to various kinds of harm before they reach at the age of maturity. As discussed earlier in this unit, girls are exposed to harmful traditional practices (HTPs) such as female genital mutilation/cutting. Minor girls are also exposed to early/child marriage in many parts of Ethiopia.

Child marriage: Child marriage refers to marriage which involves girls below the age of 18. The prevalence of child marriage is declining in Ethiopia and other African countries. However, it is still widely practiced in different regions of Ethiopia. According to international human rights conventions, child marriage is regarded as violation of the rights of the child. Child marriage has the following major harmful consequences:

- Young girls enter into marital relation when they are too young to give their consent to get married.
- Child marriage inhibits girls' personal development; it hinders girls' chance to education and future professional development.
- Child marriage exposes young girls to sexual abuse by their older husbands.
- Child marriage leads to early pregnancies, which increases risks of diseases and complications during child delivery, fistula (a severe reproductive health problem affecting thousands of women in Ethiopia), and death of the mother or child.

Child marriage is an illegal practice according to the Criminal Code of Ethiopia. Despite these legal restrictions, however, child marriage is still practiced in different regions of the country. Examine the facts listed below.



Facts about child marriage in Ethiopia

- Forty percent of all women who are in their early twenties married before the age of 18. The figure for Amhara region is 56%.
- Eight per cent of girls aged 15-19 were married before they reach at the age of 15. The figure for Amhara region is 39%.
- Uneducated girls, girls from poor family, and girls living in rural areas more likely marry earlier that rich-family, urban and educated girls (Harper et al, 2018, page 44).

Read more on child marriage and its implications for the wellbeing of girls.

Factors that encourage child marriage

According to study findings, there are various factors that drive child marriage. Social norms and economic factors are the two major factors that support the continuation of the practice.

Social norms

Social norms contribute a lot for the continuation of child marriage in many parts of the world. Sexual purity of girls is one of the social norms that influence parents and relatives to protecting girls from pre-marital sex. Premarital sex and pregnancy would expose the girl and her family to social exclusion in many parts of Ethiopia. The value attached to virginity is another factor that encourages child marriage. Girl's reputation and family social status are associated with sexual purity of girls. Parents incline to marry off their daughter before their daughter reaches at the stage of puberty to avoid the possibility of pre-marital sex and pregnancy. Community members influence unmarried teen-age girls to get married as early as possible. They do this through social pressure including insulting unmarried young girls. *Komoker,* an Amharic term*,* is the widely used insult to ridicule girls considered to be late to get married.

Economic factors

Economic issues are among the major factors that support the continuation of child marriage. In many areas of Ethiopia marriage provides economic security for young

girls. Hence, parents, in some cases girls, support child marriage for economic benefits such as access to land and other resources. Parents' desire to get a good husband for their daughter is also another reason.

4.4.2 Marginalization of older persons

We have discussed age-based marginalization considering the vulnerability of children. Age-based marginalization also affects older people. The phrase 'older persons' refers to adults with the age of 60 and above. The number of older people is increasing globally. According to the estimation of the United Nations (2009), the number of older people will increase to 2 billion by 2050. Eighty percent of the 2 billion older persons would live in low and middle-income countries. This means Africa would have a large number of older adults after 30 years. Ethiopia, the second populous country in Africa, would also have millions of older persons after three decades.

Read about the impacts of demographic changes

- What do you think about this demographic change? What are the potential challenges of an increasing population of older people?
- Ethiopia currently has large number of younger people. What are the advantages and challenges of having large population of young people in countries like Ethiopia?

People's attitude towards older persons is changing over time in Ethiopia and all over the world. Older men and women have been respected across Ethiopian cultures. Older persons have been considered as custodians of tradition, culture, and history. The role of older persons has been crucial in mentoring younger people, resolving disputes, and restoring peace across Ethiopian cultures. Situations are changing as family structures and living patterns are changing from time to time. Rural-urban migration, changes in values and life style, education and new employment opportunities lead to so many changes. Care and support for older men

and women decline as younger people migrate to urban areas and exposed to economic pressure and new life styles.

Ageism is a widely observed social problem in the world. Ageism refer to stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination against people based on their age. Older women and men enjoyed a certain level of support and respected in the past. This was true in many cultures of Ethiopia. Things have been changing in recent times. Older people are facing various problems as a result of modernization, globalization, and urbanization. Older people are exposed to social exclusion because of their lower social and economic status. In most cases, older people are excluded from social, cultural, political and economic interactions in their communities. Older persons are marginalized because they are considered as social burden rather than social assets. Communities do not provide older persons with opportunities to contribute to their communities.

Discuss changes related to older people

- What kind of challenges do older men and women face in Ethiopia? Do the challenges vary in rural and urban areas?
- Do you think that respect for older people is declining over time?
- What kind of change do you observe in social and economic status of older people in the community you come from?

4.5. Religious and ethnic minorities

We have discussed the marginalization of different social and occupational groups in different socio-cultural contexts. Religious and ethnic minorities also face different forms of marginalization. There are several examples of marginalization and discrimination targeting religious and ethnic minorities in the world. Let us mention two widely known examples.

- The Jewish people suffered from discrimination and persecution in different parts of the world. They were targets of extermination in Germany and other Western European countries because of their identity. More than 6 million Jewish people were killed during the period of Adolf Hitler, the leader of the Nazi Party in Germany. This large scale extermination of the Jewish people is called the Holocaust.

- Muslim Rohingyas are among the most marginalized and persecuted people in the world. According to Abdu Hasnat Milton et al (2017), the Rohingya are 'one of the most ill-treated and persecuted refugee groups in the world'. In recent years, more than half-a-million Rohingyas fled from their homes in Nyanmar to neighboring countries such as Bangladesh. As people living in refugee camps, the Rohingyas are vulnerable to problems such as malnutrition and physical and sexual abuse.

These are among the widely known examples of discrimination against religious and ethnic minorities. The problem is not limited to specific areas, regions or countries. Although the level of the problem varies in different contexts, religious and ethnic minorities face different forms of discrimination in many parts of the world.

Reflect on these questions

Ethiopia has been facing identity-based conflicts in in different regions in recent years. Several people lost their lives as well as their property. Thousands of people were also displaced as a result of identity-based conflicts. Public facilities and private investments were also destroyed.

- Do you consider discrimination targeting minority religious and ethnic groups as a major problem in our country?
- If you think it is a major problem, what are the causes of marginalization of minority ethnic and religious groups?
- How do we protect minority groups from marginalization

and discrimination?

4.6. Human right approaches and inclusiveness: Anthropological perspectives

All forms of marginalization and discrimination against vulnerable and minority groups contradict the principles of human rights. The major human rights conventions denounce discrimination against women, children, people with disability, older people and other minority and vulnerable groups. For example, people with disabilities have the right to inclusive services and equal opportunities. Hence, buildings and compounds of service giving institutions (e.g., schools and hospitals) must be accessible to people with disabilities. The human rights of women and girls include right to be free from harmful practices such as forced marriage, child marriage, and female genital mutilation/cutting. Any form of discrimination, exclusion, and gender-based violence also violate the human rights girls and women.

Explore the human rights conventions

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is a human rights treaty approved by the United Nations in 1989. The Convention has 41 articles focusing on the survival rights, development rights, protection rights and participation rights of the child.

Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is a human rights treaty endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly in 1979.

Read the two conventions and outlines articles that denounce exclusion and discrimination against children and women.

Anthropology appreciates cultural diversity and commonality. Do you remember the meaning of cultural relativism? It is one of the guiding principles in social anthropology. It is about the importance of understanding the values, norms, customs and practices of a particular culture in its own context. This requires appreciating the life styles of others including their dressing styles, food habits, beliefs, rituals and celebrations. It also requires avoiding value judgments such as saying 'this custom is backward or primitive'. This does not mean that we need to appreciate every custom and practice. Anthropologists do not support/appreciate customary practices that violate the rights and wellbeing of individuals and groups. For example, anthropologists do not support the following harmful practices in the name of cultural relativism:

- Female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C): Anthropologists do not support FGM/C for practical reasons: FGM/C violates the rights of girls to physical integrity. Moreover, it has short and long term consequences for the health of girls and women.

- Early/child marriage: Anthropologists do not support child marriage for similar reasons: Child marriage violates the rights of young girls to make decision about their future. It destroys their chance to education, and personal and professional development. Child marriage negatively affects the physical and psychological wellbeing of young girls.

Dear Students, we are finalizing this unit. Please reflect on the following issues before you move on to the next unit:

- How do you understand cultural relativism?
- Do we need to support/appreciate harmful customary practices in the name of cultural relativism?

4.7. Unit Summary

In this Unit, we have discussed issues related to marginalization of different groups including girls, women, and older persons, religious and ethnic groups. We also discussed the marginalization of minority occupational groups such as potters,

tanners and weavers in the Ethiopian context. We can make the following conclusion based on the lessons we get from this unit. Culture embraces positive aspects (e.g., values, norms, knowledge, wisdom, and practices) that are essential for the survival of human societies. However, certain cultural values, beliefs, and practices have negative implications for the rights and wellbeing of social groups (e.g., women and girls) and minority occupational groups. As a remedy of this limitations of culture, we have also dealt with the human rights approach and the importance of inclusive approaches to protect the rights of marginalized, vulnerable and minority groups. In the next Unit you will learn about ethnicity, ethnic groups, ethnic identity, and theories of ethnic identity.

Suggested Reading Materials

Abul Hasnat Milton, Mijanur Rahman, Sumaria Hussain, Charulata Jindal, Sushmita Choudhury, Shahnaz Akter, Shahana Ferdousi, Tafzila Akter Mouly, John Hall and Jimmy T. Efird (2017). Trapped in Statelessness: Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh. International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health. 14, 942, p. 1-8.

Central Statistical Agency (CSA) [Ethiopia] and ICF. (2016). Ethiopia Demographic and Health Survey 2016. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and Rockville, Maryland, USA: CSA and ICF.

FDRE. (2019). Summary: National Roadmap to End Child Marriage and FGM/C, 2020-2024. Ministry of Women, Children and Youth Affairs.

Freeman D. and Pankhurst, A. (Eds.) Living on the Edge: Marginalized Minorities of Craft-workers and Hunters in Southern Ethiopia. Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, Addis Ababa University.

Harper, C.; Jones, N.; Ghimire, A.; Marcus, R.; and Bantebya, G. K (Eds.). 2018. Empowering Adolescent Girls in Developing Countries: Gender Justice and Norm Change. New York: Routledge.

Getaneh Mehari. *2016. Cursed or Blessed: Female Genital Cutting in the Gamo Cultural Landscape, South Western Ethiopia.* Ahfad Journal, vol. 33, no. 1, pp. 3-15.

Kottak, Conrad Phillip. 2005. Mirror for Humanity: A Concise Introduction to Cultural Anthropology (fourth Edition). New York: McGraw Hill.

UNIT FIVE

INTER-ETHNIC RELATIONS, IDENTITY AND MULTICULTURALISM

Dear student!

In this unit we will discuss about ethnicity, ethnic identity, inter-ethnic relations, and multiculturalism both at theoretical and empirical levels. At empirical level we will take cases from Ethiopia and other African countries. The identity Politics has been major cause for violent conflicts partly due to ethnicity; race, nationalism and religion differences. Ethnic based conflicts have become one of the challenges in the 21st century which affect the relations between humans and between the states. Ethnic identity and understanding of ethnicity influence the way we think of others and about ourselves. It shapes our moral and political behaviors; and affects our everyday life in different ways. It affects things we do and think, from our everyday behavior to our beliefs we up held about ourselves and others. Identities related to ethnicity have a political, sociological and economic importance as it affects the relationships and coexistence in multicultural and diversity contexts.

Based on theoretical discourses, the unit provides insights regarding ethnic identity and ethnic relations how the terms are defined and perceived by different scholars. The maintaining of particular world-views, and contestations and ways societies construct identities and use it for nation-building, economic development, political mobilizations, control of economic resources and political power are also discussed in this unit. The discussion also incorporates issues of ethnicity, ethnic identity and multiculturalism in Ethiopia. You as student are expected to engage in the discussion; share your experiences, by undertaking debates about the pros and cons of the politics of ethnicity and politicization of the ethnic identities.

Contents and Learning outcomes

The contents of the unit include: concepts, such as ethnicity, ethnic identity, ethnic group, multiculturalism, ethnic boundaries, nation building and influential theories of ethnicity. The influential theoretical positions including Primordial, Instrumental and Constructivist are addressed and will be augmented by empirical cases.

Unit learning outcomes:

Up on completion of the unit, the student will be able to:

- ✓ Define ethnicity, ethnic identity, ethnic groups and compare it with other identifications and group categorizations
- ✓ Understand ethnic identity and ethnic group as an outcome of a dialectical process of internal and external processes and historical trajectories
- ✓ Identify the major theories of ethnicity and describe the arguments regarding the nature, characteristics and feature of ethnicity
- ✓ Explain structures of ethnic relations and how the ethnic groups maintain their boundaries (identities) in the process of interactions with the others
- ✓ Realize ethnicity as a dynamic social organization, and ethnic boundaries flexible that are reproduced through social interaction
- ✓ Analyze how ethnic identities are socially constructed and manipulated as a tool for economic and political gains.

5.1 Ethnic Groups and Ethnic Identity

Dear student, this section provides a detailed conceptual explanation and discussion about ethnic groups and ethnic identity, supported by empirical cases and ethnographic examples. The concept ethnic group is the most basic, from which other alternative forms are derived.

Please reflect your views on the following questions.

- ☙ What kind of social collectivity/community do you think Ethnic group' is?
- ☙ What are the specific rules/standards for a group to be an 'ethnic group'?
- ☙ Are the ethnic groups clearly demarcated and bounded, homogeneous collectivities or a group only with a shared sense of common identity?
- ☙ How can you differentiate an ethnic group from other social categories (like cultural group, racial group or a nation etc.)?

Ethnic Group

The term 'ethnic group' is attached to different meanings. Many scholars tried to conceptualize ethnic group from different perspectives and, different definitions have been proposed to define 'ethnic group'. The earlier conception of ethnic group was that of Max Weber a German sociologist. According to him, an 'ethnic group' is formed based on belief in common descent and shared by its members, it extends beyond kinship, and political solidarity in relation to other groups. It is represented by common customs, language, religion, values, morality, and etiquette (Weber, 1978).

On the other hand B. Anderson (1983) described ethnic groups as "*an imagined community*" that possesses a "*character and quality*" (Anderson, 1983). Furthermore, Schermerhorn (1996) conceptualized ethnic group as a unit of population having unique characteristics in relation to others and united in common language, myth of origin, and history of ethnic allegiance (1996).

Many scholars use ethnic group to explain contact and inter-relationship between groups. Based on the idea of Bateson (1979) Erikson stated that ethnic categories are created out of the contact between groups, and trying to understand ethnic groups as isolated from each other is as absurd as speaking of sound from clapping one hand (Eriksen, 2002). Other scholars like F. Barth (1969), define ethnic groups as a self-identified group based on subjective factors or fundamental cultural values as they chose from their past history or existing conditions at present of which members are aware of-and-in contact with other ethnic groups. Barth (1969) further illustrated that, in a context of inter-ethnic interaction, group distinctiveness depends on identification of self and ascription by others. Members of a certain ethnic group are evaluated in accordance with their 'performance' of the value standards and 'possession' of diacritical features that represent the group against other. The, ethnic groups are defined as result of group interaction. In the interaction members of a group keep their social solidarity, and identified themselves as belonging to specific group on the basis of subjective communalities (language, myth of origin, and shared cultural entities) that defined in reference with others (Abbink, 2004).

Ethnic groups constitute an identity as defined by outsiders who do not belong to the group and the "insiders" who belong to the same group. Identification with the group is the base for mobilization of group consciousness and solidarity which would result in political activities (Kasfir, 1976).

According to Hutchinson and Smith' (1996) six main features of ethnic group are identified and the definition of an ethnic group, consists of the following;

1. *A common proper name, is used to identify and express the "essence" of the community;*
2. *A myth of common ancestry that includes the idea of common origin in time and place that gives an ethnic group a sense of fictive kinship;*
3. *Shared historical memories, or, shared memories of a common past including heroes, events, and the commemoration;*
4. *One or more elements of common culture, which need not be specified but normally, include religion, customs, and language;*
5. *A link with a homeland, not necessarily its physical occupation by the ethnic group, but only symbolic attachment to the ancestral land, as the case of people of the diaspora*
6. *A sense of solidarity at least in some sections of the ethnic group population (Hutchinson and Smith, 1996:6-7).*

Ethnic Identity

Definition of ethnic identity is different based on the underlying theory employed by scholars who are committed to resolve its conceptual meanings. There is no agreed definition for the concept ethnic identity, which is an indication for confusion surrounding the topic.

Please reflect your views on the following questions

- What is the basis for one's ethnic identity?
- Can you distinguish between the external and internal aspects of ethnic identity?
- What is the relationship of an individual to his/her ethnic group?

Ethnic identity is an affiliate construct, where individuals view themselves and viewed by others as belonging to a particular ethnic or cultural group. An individual can choose to associate with a group if the choices are available (i.e., a person is of mixed ethnic or racial heritage). Affiliation can be influenced by racial, natal, symbolic, and cultural factors (Cheung, 1993). Racial factors involve the use of physiognomic and physical characteristics, natal factors refer to "homeland" (ancestral home) or origins of individuals, their parents, and symbolic factors include those factors that typify or exemplify an ethnic group (e.g., holidays, foods, clothing, artifacts etc.)Kivisto & Nefzger, 1993)

At the individual level, ethnicity is ***a social-psychological process*** that gives an individual a sense of belonging and identity as a social phenomenon. Hence ethnic identity can be defined as a manner in which persons, on account of their ethnic origin, locate themselves psychologically in relation to one or more social systems, and perceive others in relation to those systems. Ethnic origin is meant that a person has been socialized in an ethnic group or that his or her ancestors, real or symbolic, have been members of the group. The social system is one's ethnic community or a society at large or other ethnic communities or groups, or a combination of all (Isajiw, 1990). Locating oneself in relation to a community and society is not only a psychological phenomenon, but also ***a social phenomenon*** that the internal psychological states express themselves objectively in external behavioral patterns also shared by others. Thus, individuals locate themselves in one or another community internally by states of mind and feelings, such as self-definitions or feelings of closeness, and externally by behavior appropriate to these states of mind and feelings. Behavior is an expression of identity and can be studied as an indication of its character.

Ethnic identity has objective and subjective aspects. The Objective aspects refer to observable behavior, both cultural and social, such as (1), speaking an ethnic language, practicing ethnic traditions, (2), participation in ethnic personal networks,

such as family and friendships, (3), participation in ethnic institutional organizations, such as belief systems, social organizations etc.

The subjective aspects of ethnic identity refer to images, ideas, attitudes, and feelings which can be interconnected with the objective aspects. As empirical cases indicate in Ethiopia the subjective aspects are important, when the objective markers are significantly weakened. Three types of subjective aspects of identity can include: (1) cognitive, (2) moral, and (3) affective domains.

5.2. Ethnicity: Identification and Social Categorization

Dear student this section deals with the social construction of identity, and process of group identification, categorization and its implication for lives of people. The issues of identity, ethnicity, and inter-ethnic relation and its importance in nation building in multicultural societies like Ethiopia will be elaborated below. The section offers conceptual tools, which go beyond the interpretation of a day-to-day politics and its applicability.

Reflect your views on the following questions.

- How do you describe yourself (your identity)?
- What are the ways we tell others?
- Why do you think people are obsessed with their identity?
- What is the point of obsession with who we/you are?

In human societies, the differences between individuals have big significance; because humans are individualistic and have individual personalities. To understand themselves as a species, humans have also to understand themselves as individuals within networks of other individuals. This unit explores identity, individual and collective; and how societies worldwide manage to define and categorically identify different kinds of identities, such as ethnic, racial and national identity. According to Brubaker (2004), identity is not real, either, in the sense that it is not a 'thing' that people can be said to have or to be. Identity does not compel people to do anything; it is, rather, people who engage in identification. For instance, whatever reality can be attributed to groups depends on people think that groups really exist and that they belong to them. Identity depends on processes of identification and not, in any mechanistic or causal sense, on what individual does (Jenkins, 2008).

In, this section ethnic categories and relations being defined and perceived by people; how people talk and think about their own group as well as other groups, and how particular world-views are maintained or contested will be explored in the following part.

5.2 .1 Ethnicity

This section provides detail conceptual discussion and discourses on ethnicity and the derivate concepts of ethnic group and ethnic identity. It contextualizes within the

broader social process of identification and group categorization. Through social life and everyday interaction ethnicity is created and re-created, and becomes relevant in ongoing social situations and encounters, where people' cope with the demands and challenges of life.

Reflect your views on the following questions.

- What does it mean when people talk about ethnicity?
- Why do ethnic studies and ethnic issues dominate the current public and academic discourses?
- Why ethnicity matters to some people(s) – in some situations – but not to the others?
- Does ethnicity really matters?

After the end of the second world war, words like “ethnicity”, “ethnic groups” “ethnic conflict” and “nationalism” have become quite common terms in the English language, and they keep cropping up in the press, in TV news, in political programs and in casual conversations. There has been a parallel development in the social sciences with a growing interest in such studies. During the 1980s and early 1990s, we have witnessed an explosion in the growth of scholarly publications on ethnicity, ethnic phenomenon and nationalism across different disciplines, within social sciences.

Important reason for the current academic interest in ethnicity and nationalism is the fact that such phenomena have become so visible in many societies that it has become impossible to ignore them. In the early twentieth century, many social theorists held that ethnicity and nationalism would decrease in importance and eventually vanish as a result of modernization, industrialization and individualism. This never came about. On the contrary, ethnicity and nationalism have grown in political importance in the world, particularly since the ***Second World War***.

Ethnic and national identities also become strongly pertinent following the continuous influx of labor migrants and refugees to Europe and North America, which has led to the establishment of new, permanent ethnic minorities in these areas. During the same period, indigenous populations (such as Inuits& Sami) have organized themselves politically, and demand that their ethnic identities and territorial entitlements should be recognized by the State. Finally, the political turbulence in Europe has moved issues of ethnic and national identities to the forefront of political life (***Balkanization*** is an example).

5. 2. 2. Ethnicity: A Brief Historical Overview

Dear Student, this section explores the history and meanings of ‘ethnicity’ by making a short historical overview on the use of the term, and show how the term ‘ethnicity’ have been used in various ways to refer to different human ‘groupings’ and how this opened a door for elasticity and ambiguity of its conceptual meaning. By exploring

different scholarly works and arguments, it will also attempt to define and conceptualize the concept.

Reflect your views on the following questions.

- What is the root word (etymological origin & meaning) of the term 'ethnicity'? What's its meaning?
- How do terms like 'ethnicity and ethnic' have historically been used and applied at different times and spaces?

The study of ethnicity and ethnic relations recently have become focus of attention and play a central role in the social sciences, and it replaced *class structure* and *class conflicts* which were dominate discourses. This influence has occurred on an interdisciplinary basis involving social anthropology, sociology, political theory, political philosophy and history (Erikson, 2002). In this regard, the academic and popular use of the term 'ethnicity' is fairly, modern. According to John Hutchinson and Anthony Smith (1996), the term "ethnicity" is relatively new, first appearing in the Oxford English Dictionary in 1953.

5.2. .3. The term itself –Ethnicity

The English origin of the term 'ethnicity' is connected to the term "ethnic," which is much older and has been in use since the Middle Ages. The word is derived from the Greek term '*ethnos'* (which in turn, derived from the Latin word '*ethnikos'*), which literally means "*a group of people bound together by the same manners, customs or other distinctive features*" (Vanderwerf et al., 2009). In the context of ancient Greek, the term refers to a collectivity of humans lived and acted together which is typically translated today as 'people' or 'nation' (not political unit per say, but group of people with shared communality) (Jenkins, 1997). Contrary to its literal meaning however, ancient Greeks were using the term '*ethnos'* in reference to *non-Hellenic*, people who are non-Greek and considered as second-class people. Likewise, in early England, it used to refer to someone who was *neither Christian* nor *Jewish* (to refer to heathen or pagan).

In its modern sense, it was only after the end of II World War that the term widely adopted and used. Before World War II, the term "tribe" was a choice for "pre-modern" societies and the term "race" was used to refer modern societies (Jenkins, 2001). Due to the close link between the term "race" and Nazi ideology, after the end of II WW, the term "ethnic" gradually replaced "race" both in North American and European traditions. The North American tradition adopted 'ethnic' as a substitute for ***minority groups*** in the nation-state (referring to the Jews, Italians, Irish and other people who are considered inferior to the dominant group especially the British descent). The European tradition regularly opted to use 'ethnic group' as a synonym for ***nationhood,*** defined historically by descent or territory (Vanderwerf et al.,

2009:5). At the same time both traditions shared a joint aim to replace what had become a popular, but heavily compromised (due to the Nazi experiment), concept of 'race'.

Furthermore, the collapse of the colonial world in the 1950s and 1960s has brought even more confusion on questions of '*race'*, '*culture*' and '*ethnicity'*. The homelands of former European colonizers have become populated with new, post-colonial immigrants, who are visibly different and defined as '***ethnic'***,), added the new definition of ethnicity as an ***immigrant minority*** (i.e., Pakistani, West Indian, Sri Lankan, etc.). As Jack David Eller put it, ethnicity is "vague, elusive and expansive" (Eller, 1999).

Finally, the ever-increasing influx of asylum seekers, refugees and economic migrants to Western Europe, North America and Australia, has transferred the term '*ethnic'* to a quasi-legislative domain. In this context, the term '*ethnicity'* often refers to *non-citizens* who inhabit '*our land'*, just as it did in the days of ancient Greece and Judea; that is, to *second-class* peoples.

It is obvious from this short history of the term that 'ethnicity' contains a multiplicity of meanings and such plasticity and ambiguity of the concept allows deeper misunderstandings as well as political misuses. As Jack David Eller put it, "some of the most perplexing problems arise from the vagueness of the term and phenomenon called ethnicity and from its indefinite and ever-expanding domain (Eller, 1999:8).

5.3 Conceptualizing Ethnicity

In the past few years acceptance and application of the terms "ethnicity" and "ethnic" to refer to what was before often subsumed under 'culture', 'cultural', or 'tribal' has increased.. This can be seen in the proliferation of titles dealing with *ethnic groups, ethnic identity, ethnic boundaries, ethnic conflict, ethnic cooperation or competition, ethnic politics, ethnic stratification, ethnic integration, ethnic consciousness*, and so on.

Nevertheless, most scholars who uses "ethnicity" find definition either unnecessary or they are reluctant to provide general framework for the concept. The writers generally take it for granted that the term refers to *a set of named groupings,* singled out by the researcher as ethnic units. In this sense, ethnicity is widely used as a significant structural phenomenon.

Reflect your views on the following questions.

- How do you define or conceptualize ethnicity?
- How do different scholars define and conceptualize ethnicity?

It is important to be clear about the subject – ethnicity – what it is and what it is not. None of the founding fathers of anthropology and sociology with exception of Max Weber gave ethnicity much attention. Max Weber, in his work entitled "*Economy and Society*", first published in 1922 (1978:385-98), provided the early and influential sociological conceptions of ethnicity and ethnic group. According to Weber, an "ethnic group" is based on the belief in a common descent shared by its members, extending beyond kinship, political solidarity in relation to other groups, and has common customs, language, religion, values, morality, and etiquette. In other words, ethnic groups are those human groups that keep a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities or physical type or of customs or both, or because of memories of colonization and migration. It does not matter whether or not an objective blood relationship exists, but whether it is *believed* to exist. Perhaps the most significant part of Weber's argument is that: "*ethnic membership does not constitute a group; it only facilitates group formation of any kind, particularly in the political sphere. It is primarily a political community, no matter how artificially it is organized, inspires the belief in common ethnicity*" (1978: 389).

Any cultural trait in common can provide a basis for and resources for ethnic closure: language, ritual, economic way of life, lifestyle and the division of labor are possibilities in this respect. Shared language and ritual are particularly important in ethnicity: mutual intelligibility of the behavior of others is a fundamental pre-requisite for any group, as is the shared sense of what is 'correct and proper' which constitute individual 'honor and dignity'. An ethnic group is a particular form of status group. Finally, Weber argues that since the possibilities for collective action rooted in ethnicity are 'indefinite', the ethnic group, and its close relative the nation, cannot easily be precisely defined for sociological purposes Weber (1968).

The other contribution to our understanding of ethnicity is the works of Frederik Barth (1969), a Norwegian anthropologist. Barth in *'Introduction'* part of a collection of scholarly work entitled "*Ethnic Groups and Boundaries"* (1969), provided a detail description in the study of ethnicity and the current anthropological knowledge about ethnicity stems from this influential work..

Barth began with what actors believe or think: ***ascriptions and self-ascriptions***. A ***categorical ascription*** is an ethnic ascription when it classifies a person in terms of his/her basic identity, which is determined by his/her origin and background. To the extent that ***actors use ethnic identities*** to categorize themselves and others for purposes of interaction, ***they form ethnic groups*** in this organizational sense.

Barth focused not upon the cultural characteristics of ethnic groups but upon relationships of cultural differentiation, and specifically upon contact between collectivities thus differentiated, 'us' and 'them' (Eriksen, 2002). Barth's emphasis was not so much upon the *substance* or *content* of ethnicity, what he called the 'cultural stuff', rather on the social processes, which produce and reproduce it. The features that are taken into account are not the sum of 'objective' differences, but only those which the actors themselves regard as significant, and the features which

are used by the actors as signals and emblems of differences, others are ignored, and in some relationships radical differences are played down and denied (Barth, 1969: 14).

The cultural contents of ethnic dichotomies would seem analytically to be of two orders: (i) **overt signals or signs** - visible features that people look for and exhibit to show identity, such as dress, language, house-form, or general style of life, and (ii) **basic value orientations**: the standards of morality and excellence by which performance is judged.

Ethnic categories provide an organizational vessel that may be given varying amounts and forms of content in different socio-cultural systems. In this case there is an obvious scope for ethnographic and comparative descriptions of different forms of ethnic organization. For Barth, ethnicity is seen as a '***social organization of culture difference'***. But ambiguity in the designation of ethnic groups in terms of cultural differences has been taken as a challenge by anthropologists.

Reflect your views on the following questions.

- Does this imply that ethnic groups ***don't necessarily*** have a ***distinctive culture***?
- Can two groups be culturally identical and yet constitute two different ethnic groups?
- What's the relationship between culture and ethnicity, after all?

Cultural difference was traditionally explained from the ***inside out*** before Barth, and social groups possess different cultural characteristics that make them unique and distinct in terms of common language, lifestyle, descent, religion, physical markers, history eating habits, etc.). Culture was perceived as something firmly stable, persistent and intact. However, according to Frederik Barth (1969), Cultural difference per se does not create ethnic collectivities. It is the social contact with others that leads to definition and categorization of an 'us' and a 'them'; hence, cultural difference between two groups is not the decisive feature of ethnicity. Indeed, ethnicity is essentially an aspect of a relationship, not a property of a group.

It is not the '*possession'* of cultural characteristics that makes social groups distinct but rather it is the *social interaction* with other groups that makes the difference possible, visible and socially meaningful. *Shared culture is, in this model, best understood as generated in and by processes of ethnic boundary maintenance, rather than the other way round*: the production and reproduction of difference in relation to external others is what creates the image of similarity internally *to* each other. In Barth's own words: '***the critical focus of investigation from this point of view becomes the ethnic boundary that defines the group, not the cultural stuff that it encloses***' (1969: 15).

The difference is created, developed and maintained only through interaction with others (to take an example from Ethiopia, the *Oromoness* is created and becomes culturally and politically meaningful only through the encounter with *Amharaness*, *Gurageness*, *Somaliness*, etc.). Hence, the focus in the study of ethnic difference has shifted from the study of its contents (i.e., the structure of the language, the form of the particular costumes, and nature of eating habits) to the study of cultural boundaries and social interaction. The attention should be given to social boundaries, though they may have territorial counterparts. '*Group identities must always be defined in relation to that which they are not – in other words, in relation to non-members of the group'* (Eriksen, 1993: 10).

Reflect your views on the following questions.

- What is an ethnic boundary?
- Is an ethnic boundary physical/territorial boundary per se?
- Why, when and how do individuals and groups maintain ethnic boundaries?

For ethnicity to come about, the groups must have a minimum of contact between them, and they must have the ideas of each other as being culturally different from themselves. If these conditions are not fulfilled, there is no ethnicity, for ethnicity is essentially an aspect of a relationship, not a property of a group. Furthermore, Barth's investigation established a foundation for understanding ethnicity in ***Universalist*** rather than in ***particularist*** terms. This means culture and social groups emerge only through interaction with others, and then ethnicity cannot be confined to minority groups only. As Jenkins (1997) and Isajiw (2000) rightly argued, we cannot study minority ethnic groups without at the same time studying the majority ethnicity.

Other than Barth, Clifford Geertz has elegantly defined *ethnicity as the 'world of personal identity collectively ratified and publicly expressed' and 'socially ratified personal identity'* (1973:268, 309).

In general the 'basic social anthropological model of ethnicity' can be summarized as follows:

- ✓ *Ethnicity is a matter of cultural differentiation - although, to reiterate the main theme of social identity (Jenkins 2004), identification always involves a dialectical interplay between similarity and difference.*
- ✓ *Ethnicity is centrally a matter of shared meanings - what we conventionally call 'culture' - but is also produced and reproduced during interaction.*
- ✓ *Ethnicity, as identification, is collective and individual, externalized in social interaction and the categorization of others, and internalized in personal self-identification.*

A distinct culture is a manifestation of a group's distinct historical experience. The emphasis on culture as the point of departure for our understanding of the nature of ethnicity is not intended to mean that members of an ethnic group must always share one and the same culture to the exclusion of any other. Rather, it is intended to mean that persons who include themselves in an ethnicity would have a relation to a group who either now or at some point in the past has shared a unique culture.

5.4 Theories of Ethnicity: Primordialism, Instrumentalism and Social Constructivism

Since the middle of twentieth century, a perennial and argumentative debate about the nature of ethnicity/ethnic identity has taken place. This argument gave rise to a range of theoretical controversies about the capacity of humans to intervene in their own lives, to determine or to be determined. Out of the debate three important theoretical perspectives emerged. These are *the Primordialist*, I*nstrumentalist* and *Constructivist* approaches and they made possible the understanding of the nature and characteristics of ethnicity, ethnic identity and ethnic interactions. Thus, in this section a brief theoretical debates and discussions on the fundamentals of ethnicity is provided.

Reflect your views on the following questions.

- Is ethnicity essentially unchanging and unchangeable?
- Is ethnicity a desirable aspect of human nature?
- Is it, to whatever extent, socially constructed, strategically or tactically manipulable, and capable of change at both the individual and collective levels?
- Is it socially constructed?

Table 1 - Three Basic Anthropological Approaches for Understanding Ethnicity

Perspective	**Description**
Primordialist Approach	*Ethnicity is fixed at birth. Ethnic identification is based on deep, 'primordial' attachments to a group or culture*
Instrumentalist Approach	*Ethnicity, based on people's "historical" and "symbolic" memory, is something created and used and exploited by leaders and others in the pragmatic pursuit of their own interests.*
Constructivist	*Ethnic identity is not something people "possess" but*

Approach	*something they "construct" in specific social and historical contexts to further their own interests.*

These theories generally reflect changes of approach in anthropology over the **past 20 years,** i.e. the shift from cultural evolution theories, to structural-functionalist theories, to conflict theories, and finally to postmodern theories. The changes are related to modernity and globalization where the later started as an economic phenomenon and end up as a phenomenon of identity. Modernity has undermined the traditional ways of defining identity and "*the past is stripped away, place loses its significance, community loses its hold, objective moral norms vanish, and what remains is simply the self."* This resulted in the loss of identity, fragmentation and rootlessness at the personal level and the confusing of identities at the collective level.

5.4.1. The Primordial Model of Ethnicity

The *Primordialist* approach is the oldest in anthropological literature. It was popular until the mid-1970s. The *Primordialist* thinking can be traced back to the German Romantic philosophers, such as J.G. Herder (1744–1803), who stated the primacy of emotions and language. He defined society as a deep-seated, mythical community and envisaged that every *Volk* (people) had its own values, customs, language and 'spirit' (*Volksgeist*). Thus he argued for the "*atavistic power*" of the *blood* and *soil* (*Blut und Boden*) that bound one closely with one's people (*das Volk*). Primordialist is an "objectivist or essentialist theory" it argues, that "*ultimately there is some real, tangible, foundation for ethnic identification*."

An anthropologist, Clifford Geertz (1973: 255-310) systematized the primordial model. He articulated ethnicity as a natural phenomenon with its foundations in primordial ties deriving from kinship, locality and culture (Geertz 1963. Furthermore, Geertz made it clear that ties of blood, language and culture are *seen* by actors to be deep, obligatory and *seen* as natural. According to Geertz these presumed 'primordial attachments' are likely to be stimulated and quickened by the political modernization of nation-building. In this sense it can be said that ethnicity is something given, ascribed at birth, deriving from the kin-and-clan-structure of human society, and hence something more or less fixed and permanent (Geertz, 1963; Isaacs, 1975; Stack, 1986).

On the other hand Isaacs' (1974) model further illustrates the primordial ties as a means of explaining the power and persistence of ethnic identity, which he called '***basic group identity***' (Jones 1997:65–66). Ethnic identity is argued to be assigned at birth and more fundamental and natural than other social links. Anthony D. Smith (1986) theorized the defining elements of ethnic identification as psychological and emotional, emerging from a person's historical and cultural backgrounds. According to him the 'core' of ethnicity resides in the myths, memories, values, symbols and the

characteristic styles of particular historic configurations, i.e., what he calls *'a myth-symbol complex'.* Smith concluded that, 'primordialism' makes ***two distinct claims***. Firstly, ethnicity and ethnic attachment is "***natural and innate***", which would never change over time, and secondly, it is "***ancient and perennial***" (Smith, 1986). By this, ethnicity is an ascribed status and ethnic membership is fixed, permanent and primarily ascribed through birth.

In general Primordialist theories view human society as a **conglomeration** of distinct social groups. At birth a person "becomes" a member of a particular group and. ethnic identification is based on deep, 'primordial' attachments to that group, established by kinship and descent. One's ethnicity is thus "fixed" and an unchangeable part of one's identity.

5.4.2. Instrumentalist (Situational) Theory of Ethnicity

The instrumentalist theorists view ethnicity as situationally defined, depending on rational calculations of advantage and stimulated by political mobilization under the leadership of actors whose primary motives are non-ethnic (Eidheim, 1971, Cohen, 1974a, and Esman, 1994). Given this, Banks (1996) explained the instrumentalist understandings of ethnicity as *an instrument of group mobilization for political and economic ends* (Banks, 1996: 40). By this, ethnicity is something that can be changed, constructed or even manipulated to gain specific political and/or economic ends.

Proponents of this perspective (e.g., Abner Cohen, Paul Brass and Ted Gurr) advocate that in the contexts of modern states, leaders (political elites) use and manipulate perceptions of ethnic identity to further their own ends and stay in power. In this regard, *ethnicity is created in the dynamics of elite competition within the boundaries determined by political and economic realities*" and *ethnic groups are to be seen as a product of political myths, created and manipulated by culture elites in their pursuit of advantages and power*.

Abner Cohen (1974) "*placed [a] greater emphasis on the ethnic group as a collectively organized strategy for the protection of economic and political interests*" (Jones 1997:74). Ethnic groups share common interests, and in pursuit of these interests they develop "*basic organizational functions*: *such as distinctiveness or boundaries (ethnic identity); communication; authority structure; decision making procedure; ideology; and socialization*" (Cohen 1974: xvi–xvii).

According to, Daniel Bell (1975) and Jeffrey Ross (1982)ethnicity is "*a group option in which resources are mobilized for the purpose of pressuring the political system to allocate public goods for the benefit of the members of a self-differentiating collectivity*" (Ross, 1982)..

In extreme sense the ***ethnic group*** should be regarded *not as a community* at all but as *a rational and purposive association*. In a moderate view there is a cultural content in an ethnic community, but that the boundaries of the group depend on the

purpose in hand which could be the pursuit of political advantage and/or material self-interest.

5.4.3. Constructivist Theory of Ethnicity

The basic notion in this approach is that ethnicity is something that is being negotiated and constructed in everyday living. However, the construction depends on historical, social and the presence of ethnic raw material to be utilized. It regards ethnicity as a process, which continues in the making. It has much to do with the demands of everyday survival (*ethnicity is constructed in the process of feeding, clothing, sending to school and conversing with children and others*). This approach has a ***subjectivist stance*** that the role of individual agencies and circumstances are triggers of historical and social factors. However, it does not mean that all "subjectivists" reject all objective aspects of ethnicity even though they tend to make it dependent on the socio-psychological experiences.

F. Barth who is the leading figure of this approach viewed ethnic identity as an "***individualistic strategy***" in which individuals move from one identity to another to "advance their personal economic and political interests, or to minimize their losses" (Jones 1997:74). Ethnic identity forms through boundary maintenance and interaction between individuals. For Barth ethnic boundaries were psychological boundaries; ethnic culture and its content were irrelevant. Overall, interaction between individuals does not lead to an assimilation or homogenization of culture. Instead, cultural diversity and ethnic identity are still maintained in a non-static form.

Jenkins (1997) further noted that, as far as the flow of individuals from one ethnic group to another is possible, it is possible to argue that the boundaries of ethnicity are permeable and osmotic (Jenkins, 1997: 53). This provoked that ethnicity is dynamic that changes through time and space; and ethnic identities are constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed.

Reflect your views on the following questions.

- Can you draw a clear distinction between the major arguments of primordialism, instrumentalism and social constructivism about the nature and characteristics of ethnicity?
- Is it wrong to assume instrumentalism as another version of constructivism? Why?

Multiculturalism: Definition and Theories

Multiculturalism can be defined as the way in which a given society engages with cultural diversity. The underlying assumption is that members of very different

cultures can coexist peacefully and multiculturalism articulates the view that society is strengthened through preserving, respecting, and even encouraging cultural diversity. From the perspective of political philosophy, multiculturalism is to mean the ways in which societies formulate and implement official policies which deal with the equitable treatment of different cultures.

• Multiculturalism is the manner in which a society deals with cultural diversity, both at the national and community level.
• Multiculturalism presupposes that society in general benefits from increased diversity through the harmonious coexistence of different cultures.
• Multiculturalism can be conceptualized by one of two theories: the "melting pot" theory or the "salad bowl" theory.

Multiculturalism can take place all over the nation or it can take place within communities of nation. Multiculturalism can occur naturally through immigration, and when jurisdictions of various cultures are united together through legislative verdict (Example French and English Canada).

Advocates of multiculturalism believe that people should keep hold of at least some aspects of their customs or cultures. In opposition others say multiculturalism threatens the social order by reducing the identity and pressure of the predominant culture. In this sense multiculturalism is clearly a sociopolitical issue.

Theories of Multiculturalism

There are two theories or models to conceptualize multiculturalism. These theories are used to understand how different cultures are integrated into a single society and best defined by the metaphors (symbols) commonly used to describe them. These are **the "melting pot"** and **the "salad bowl***"* theories.

The Melting Pot Theory

This theory assumes that different immigrant groups will be inclined to "melt together," leaving their own individual cultures and subsequently will be fully assimilated into the predominant society and its culture. This particularly used to describe the assimilation of immigrants into countries like the United States and the melting pot theory is often shown by the metaphor of a smelting pots in which the "elements iron and carbon are melted together to create a single, stronger metal

steel". In 1782, French-American immigrant J. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur wrote that in America, “individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men, whose labors and future will one day cause great changes in the world,” (Longley, Robert, 2021). This simply means heterogeneous cultures will be mixed and become one or create a monoculture. The melting pot model has been criticized because it reduced diversity into a single entity and causing people to lose their traditions, and for having to be implemented through governmental policy. For example, nearly 350,000 Indigenous peoples were assimilated into American society without any regard for the diversity of their heritages and lifestyles by the U.S. Indian Reorganization Act of 1934(Longley, Robert, 2021)

The Salad Bowl Theory

This is more of a liberal theory of multiculturalism in comparison to the melting pot theory. The salad bowl theory illustrates a heterogeneous society in which people coexist by retaining at least some of the distinctiveness aspects of their traditional culture. Like ingredients of salad, various cultures are brought together; however, retain their own distinct flavors rather than mixing into a single homogeneous culture. New York City, in the United States, is considered as an example of a salad bowl society. It comprises many unique ethnic communities like “Little India,” “Little Odessa,” and “Chinatown” (Longley, Robert, 2021). According to the assertion of salad bowl theory it is not necessary for people to abandon their cultural heritage in order to be considered members of the dominant society.

On contrary, there is argument that the cultural differences encouraged by the salad bowl model can divide a society and result in chauvinism and discrimination. Moreover, as critics indicate to a 2007 study conducted by American political scientist Robert Putnam that people living in salad bowl multicultural communities were less likely to vote or volunteer for community development projects”(Longley, Robert,2021).

The Characteristics of a Multicultural Society

The defining characteristics of Multicultural societies are that people of different races, ethnicities, and nationalities living together in the same community. In multicultural communities, people up hold, transfer, cherish, and share their distinctive cultural ways of life, languages, art, traditions, and behaviors.

The characteristics of multiculturalism often spread out into the community’s public schools, where curricula are made to introduce young people to the qualities and advantages of cultural diversity. However, occasionally criticized as a form of “political correctness,” educational systems in multicultural societies emphasize the

histories and traditions of minorities in classrooms and textbooks. Multiculturalism as a social phenomenon found in different places around the world(Example US, Argentina, Canada etc.)

The Importance of Diversity

Multiculturalism is a means to attain a high degree of cultural diversity. Diversity takes place when people of diverse races, nationalities, religions, ethnicities, and philosophies gather together to form a community. An actual diverse society is one that recognizes and values the cultural differences in its people. Supporters of cultural diversity argue that it makes humanity stronger and may, in fact, be essential to its long-term survival. In 2001, UNESCO recognized such position in its General Conference and asserted in its Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity that "...cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature"(Longley, Robert,2021). Today, countries, workplaces, and schools are ever more made up of different cultural, racial, and ethnic groups. By acknowledging and learning about these different groups, communities make trust, respect, and understand across all cultures. Different communities and organizations in various settings can benefit from the different backgrounds, skills, experiences, and new ways of thinking that come with cultural diversity.

Dear student can you discuss the advantage and disadvantages of multiculturalism in Ethiopia??

5.5 Unit Summary

In this Unit we tried to explain and discuss the concepts of identity, ethnicity as identity categorization. Ethnicity has got a widespread mainstream use in end of 20th c. It has been employed to describe an expanding range of social and political concerns. As we have seen the term has gained popularity, and its meanings have shifted. Most social scientists from Weber to Barth agreed today that ethnicity is a constructed, artificial category, its characteristics and boundaries have been renegotiated, redefined over the years to suit different contexts and objectives. There also seems confusion between race and ethnicity. Most people tend to consider race as a biological construct fundamentally explained in terms of phonotypical expressions. However, as it has been already elucidated race itself is human construct. We have also seen the three prominent theories of ethnicity. Primordialism which shows that ethnicity has existed at all times in human history and that modern ethnic groups have historical roots far into the past. Humanity has been understood as divided into primordially existing groups rooted by kinship and biological heritage. Constructivism sees the primordialist views as basically flawed, and holds that ethnic

groups are only products of human social interaction, maintained only in so far as they are maintained as valid social constructs in societies. We have also seen that Instrumentalism is a perspective towards ethnicity that sees ethnic classification as a mechanism of social stratification or as the basis for a social hierarchy.

Suggested Reading Materials

Max Weber, *Economy and Society* v1, Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, eds. (New York: Bedminster Press, 1968)

George DeVos and Lola Romanucci-Ross, eds. *Ethnic Identity: Cultural Continuities and Change*, (Palo Alto: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1975).

M. Elaine Burgess, "The Resurgence of Ethnicity: Myth or Reality?" in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 1, 1978.

David Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

Paul Brass, *Ethnic Groups and the State* (Totowa, NJ: Barnes and Noble Books, 1985)

Pierre van den Berghe, *The Ethnic Phenomenon* (New York: Praeger, 1987).

Milton Yinger, *Ethnicity: Source of Strength? Source of Conflict?* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994)

Abner Cohen, Customs and Politics in Urban Africa: A Study of Migrants in Yoruba Towns (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969)

Anthony Smith, *National Identity* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1991).

Fredrik Barth, ed., *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1969).

Thomas Hylland Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism*: *Anthropological Perspectives (London: Pluto* Press, 1993).

Longley, Robert.2021."What Is Multiculturalism? Definition, Theories, and Examples." Thought Co, thoughtco.com/what-is-multiculturalism-4689285.

UNIT SIX

CUSTOMARY AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE SYSTEMS AND PEACE MAKING

Dear Students!

You have discussed theories related to ethnicity, ethnic groups, ethnic identity, and theories of ethnic identity in unit 5. In this unit, you will discuss issues related to customary and local governance and peacemaking in the Ethiopian setting. Specifically, we will discusses the role of customary institutions in settling intra and inter-ethnic conflicts; women's role and women's institutions in conflict resolution and peacemaking; and the main features of legal pluralism in Ethiopia. Remember: your participation is very important as the modular course employs a student-centered approach.

Content of the Unit:

- Indigenous and local governance
- Institutions of intra and inter-ethnic conflict resolution
- Structures of indigenous justice systems
- Strengths and limitations of indigenous conflict resolution institutions
- Women's role in conflict resolution and peacemaking
- Legal pluralism: interaction between customary and state legal systems

Unit Learning Outcomes:

Up on the successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

- Identify customary systems of governance and conflict resolution institutions in Ethiopian context;

- Compare similarities and difference among indigenous conflict resolution institutions in a cross-cultural perspective;
- Analyze the strengths and limitations of indigenous conflict resolution institutions;
- Explain the role of women and women's institutions in settling disputes and making peace in different cultural settings; and
- Explain the advantages and limitations of legal pluralism.

6.1 Indigenous and local governance

Indigenous systems of governance have widely been employed to maintain social order across Ethiopian regions. The role of indigenous governance was indispensable before the advent of the modern state system. Anthropologists have been studying indigenous systems of governance in Ethiopia and other parts of Africa. Some of the indigenous systems of governance have been well-studied while many others have got little attention by scholars. Understanding of indigenous systems of governance helps us know our cultures in a better way. It will also help us enhance inter-cultural understanding and smooth relationships among different ethnic/cultural groups. We do not have space to take examples from every region and culture. Hence, we have outlined some examples of indigenous systems of governance. As students, you are expected to read more to have a broad understanding of this topic. You can also discuss with classmates coming from various cultural backgrounds to learn about indigenous systems of governance in different parts of Ethiopia.

The Oromo Gadaa

The Gadaa of the Oromo is one of the well-studied indigenous systems of governance. Various scholars have been studying the Oromo Gadaa since the 1950s. Paul Baxter, Eike Haberland and Asmerom Legesse are some of the scholars who studied the Oromo Gadaa. Asmerom, a famous anthropologist, is widely known for his ethnographic studies on the Oromo political system. He published a lot on the Gaada system, particularly focusing on the Borena Oromo. The following are two of his books on Oromo indigenous political system:

- *Gadaa: Three Approaches to the Study of African Society,* published in 1973
- *Oromo Democracy: An Indigenous Political System*, published in 2000.

The *Gadaa* system is 'an age grading institution of the Oromo that has a complex system of administration, law making and dispute settlement' (Pankhurst and Getachew 2008, xiv). The *Gadaa* is a highly celebrated institution of governance and dispute settlement among the Oromo people. *Gadaa* is widely mentioned as an egalitarian (democratic) system of governance. In the Gadaa system, political power is transferred from one generation set (*Luuba*) to another every eight years. Gaada officials such as the *Abba Gaada* and *Abba Seera* (father of law) serve for eight years and leave their position to the new generation of *Gadaa* officials.

The *Gaada* system involves a continuous process of law making and revision. The law making process has rooms for wider participation of the people. *Gumi gaayo*, a law making assembly of the Borana Oromo, is a good example. *Gumi gaayo* is held every eight years to revising, adapting, making and publicizing the customary law (*seera*) and custom (*aadaa*) of the Oromo. The Waliso Oromo have a law making assembly known as *yaa'iiharaa*, an equivalent of *gumigaayo*, held every eight years. The Gaada is an indigenous system of governance, conflict resolution, and peacemaking. The indigenous system of governance among the Oromo also include institutions of conflict resolution such as the *Jaarsa Biyyaa* (literally: elders of the soil/land) institution (Dejene 2007). We will discuss the role of the *Jaarsa Buyyaa* (council of elders) in settling conflicts and restoring peace in the next section of this unit.

The Gedeo Baalle

The Gedeo of southern Ethiopia have an indigenous system of governance called *Baalle*. The *Baalle* and the *Gaada* system of the Oromo have some similarities. For example, both have age grading system and exercise periodic transfer of power (i.e., every eight years). The role of religion is high in the two indigenous systems of governance. Moreover, the customary law of the Gedeo is called Seera. The Ya'a, the general assembly, is the highest body of the Gedeo indigenous system of governance. The Baalle is a complex system which has three administrative hierarchies: Abba Gada, Roga (traditional leader next the *Abba Gada*), and two levels of council of elders known as Hulla Hayyicha and Songo Hayyicha. The *Abba*

Gada is the leader of the *Baalle*. The Baalle system has a body of laws called *Seera*. Conflicts are resolved by the Songo Hayyicha at village level. When disputes are not settled at the village level, cases can be referred to the Hulla Hayyicha and finally to the *Abba Gada*. In general, the Gedeo system of governance has the following major institutions: the Ya'a (general assembly), the Seera (customary law), the Abba Gada, *and* council of elders (Getachew, 2014).

Reflect your views on the following questions.

- What do the similarities between Gaada and the Gedeo Baalle system indicate?
- Why do we have such cross-cultural similarities?
- Does it indicate long-term interactions among different cultural/ethnic groups?

Dere Woga of the Gamo

The Gamo are among Omotic peoples of southern Ethiopia. Unlike their neighboring people such as Wolayta and Dawro, the Gamo did not have a centralized political system. The Gamo people were organized into several local administrations locally known as *deres*. According to anthropological findings, most of *deres* were governed by a *ka'o* (king) and *halaqa* (elected leader). The Gamo indigenous system of governance embraces the *dere woga* (customary law) and the *dubusha* assemblies. The highest body of the indigenous governance is the *dere dubusha*, a general assembly of local people. The *dere dubusha* is responsible to make and revise customary laws, resolve major disputes that cannot be solved at the lower levels. The *dubushas* assembly has three hierarchies: 1) the *dere dubusha* (at the top), 2) sub-*dere dubusha* (at the middle level), and 3) *guta*/neighborhood *dubusha* (at the village level). Minor cases and disputes are resolved by the *dere cima*, council of elders.

Like the Oromo Gaada and the Gedeo Baalle, the indigenous governance of the Gamo is embedded in the Gamo belief system. It is believed that telling a lie and

hiding the truth, especially at *dubusha* assemblies, are considered as violation of taboo. According to indigenous belief of the Gamo, breaching such as taboo will lead to spiritual pollution, which in turn will lead to misfortunes including lack of fertility, illness, and death of human beings and livestock. As a result of this belief (e.g., fear of misfortunes), people reveal the truth in *dubusha* assemblies. This behavior is essential to identify and punish the wrong doer, resolve conflicts, and restore peaceful relationships. In the next section, we will discuss indigenous institutions of conflict resolution and peacemaking.

6.2 Indigenous institutions of conflict resolution and peacemaking

Conflict is a common phenomenon in human societies and communities. Human beings develop different institutions and mechanisms to resolve conflicts and restore peace and social order. More than 80 ethnic and cultural groups live together in Ethiopia. Each ethnic group has its own institutions of conflict resolution and peace making. Regardless of cross cultural diversity, most ethnic/cultural groups in Ethiopia have similar conflict resolution institutions. The basic ones are customary (most of the time unwritten) laws, customary courts, and council of elders. The role of notable elders is essential in all cultural settings in Ethiopia. Although women play a significant role in conflict resolution and peacemaking, they are marginalized from mainstream conflict resolution institutions and practices in most cultural settings.

Indigenous institutions of conflict resolutions can be divided into two main types: 1) intra-ethnic conflict resolution institutions, which address conflicts between individuals and groups within the same ethnic group; and 2) inter-ethnic conflict resolution institutions that resolve conflicts between individuals and groups of different ethnic groups. We will discuss the two types of institutions taking examples from different cultural contexts. Let us begin with the first one.

6.2.1 Intra-ethnic conflict resolution institutions

Conflicts and disputes may occur within the same ethnic group or between individuals or groups of different ethnic groups. Intra-ethnic conflict resolution institutions address conflicts between individuals and groups (e.g., clans) within the same ethnic group. Peoples across Ethiopian regions have intra-ethnic institutions

and mechanisms of conflict resolution and peacemaking. These institutions are parts of indigenous systems of governance. In this section we will discuss the major features of intra-ethnic institutions of conflict resolution. As Ethiopia is a big multicultural country, we need to discuss these issues taking examples from selected cultural settings. You, as a student, are expected to read different materials and discuss issues with your classmates to expand your knowledge.

There are different indigenous institutions of conflict resolution and peacemaking across regions and cultures in Ethiopia. Authors use different terms to discuss these indigenous institutions. The following are some of them: customary dispute resolution mechanisms; traditional mechanisms of conflict resolution; grassroots justice systems; and customary justice institutions. To get more information, read reference materials listed at the end of this unit (e.g., Alula Pankhurst and Getachew Assefa 2008 and Gebre Yintso, Fekade Azeze, and Assefa Fesiha 2011). In this module, we use indigenous institutions of conflict resolution and customary/indigenous justice systems interchangeably.

Components of customary justice systems

Indigenous/customary justice institutions have been widely used across Ethiopian regions and cultures. With some exceptions, customary justice institutions include three major components. The three components are 1) customary laws, 2) council of elders, and 3) customary courts or assemblies.

Customary law

Customary law refers to a body of rules, norms, and a set of moral values that serve as a wider framework for human conduct and social interactions. The Sera of the Sidama, the dere woga of the Gamo, the Seera Addaa of the Oromo; Ye Siltie Serra of the Siltie, Gordena Sera of Kestane Gurage are examples of customary laws. In most cases, customary laws are available orally. Some customary laws are published in recent years. For example, the Sebat Bet Gurage published their customary law named Kitcha: The Gurage Customary Law in 1998. Similarly, Kistane/Sodo Gurage people also have a written version of customary law known as Gordena Shengo.

Though spelt differently, the term sera/seera/serra serves as the name of customary laws of the Sidama, Siltie, Gurage, and Oromo.

- How do you explain this similarity?
- Can we consider this as an example of cross-cultural similarity among the above mentioned ethnic groups?

Council of elders

Council of elders is the second important institution of customary justice systems. The council of elders embraces highly respected and well-experienced community members who have detail knowledge of the customary laws. Members of the elder's council are also known for their personal qualities such as truthfulness and experience in settling conflicts. Elders often serve their communities on voluntary basis without any payment. The number of elders involved in conflict resolution activities may vary based on the nature of the case. The institution of council of elders has different names in various ethnic groups: Yehager Shimagile (Amhara), Jaarsaa Biyyaa (Oromo), Baliqenet (Siltie), Hayyicha (Gedeo), Guurtii (Somali), Dere Cima (Gamo), Deira Cima (Wolayita), and Cimuma (Burji).

Reflect your view on the following questions

The last three ethnic groups use similar terms to refer to council of elders: Dere *Cima* (Gamo), Deria *Cima* (Wolayita), and *Cimuma* (Burji).

- How do you explain this similarity?
- Do you think that it is due to similarities in culture and language?

Customary courts

Customary courts are public assemblies that serve two major purposes: (a) hearing, discussing, examining and settling disputes, and (b) revising, adapting, and making laws. As noted above, in most cases, indigenous justice systems in Ethiopia embrace three major structures: customary laws, customary courts, and council of elders. We will examine the structure and functions of the three components/branches of customary justice systems taking the Gamo case as an example. The customary justice system of the Gamo people of Southern Ethiopia has the following branches: 1) Dere Woga, customary laws, 2) Dere Cima, council of elders, and 3) Dubusha, customary courts or assemblies.

Dere Woga

The literal meaning of Dere Woga is the law of the land. Dere Woga is a comprehensive body of rules and procedures that govern a wide range of issues including inheritance, property ownership, marriage and divorce, conflict resolution and gender division of labor.

Dere Cima

Literally, Dere Woga means elders of the land/country. It includes notable and respected elders experienced in resolving disputes. Elders serving in dispute resolution are expected to have a sound knowledge of the customary laws, norms and values of the community.

Dubusha

The term *dubusha* has two major meanings. First, it refers to an open place (mostly under a tree) where cases are examined and conflicts resolved. Second, *dubusha* refers to customary courts or local assemblies that discuss cases and settle disputes. *Dere dubusha,* the biggest customary court in a given Gamo community, has two major functions: (a) hearing, discussing and resolving disputes, and (b) revising and making laws. In most Gamo communities, the structure of the customary courts has three levels*:* 1) *Guta dubusha,* which addresses *cases* at the village level; 2) sub-*dere dubusha, a customary court that addresses cases* at the *kebele* level; and 3) *dere dubusha, a customary court that addresses cases* at the higher level. The *dere dubusha* is also responsible to make laws and revise existing laws. Procedurally, minor cases would be heard at the *guta dubusha* level, if not settled, referred to the second and third level of the structure.

According to the Gamo indigenous belief, *dere dubusha* (the place where cases are examined and resolved) is a sacred place where supernatural power exists. It is a place where curses are uttered in its name; where justice is delivered; and where important assemblies are held. *Dubushas* are regarded as sacred places where truth and justice prevail. Misconducts such as telling a lie (providing the court with false information) during *dubusha* assemblies are considered as transgression of taboos. According to local belief, transgression of taboos will bring about misfortunes to individuals and communities. The following is the main advantages of the Gamo justice system. Customary courts are easily accessible because each Gamo community has several customary courts (Temesgen 2011; Getaneh 2016).

Major characteristic features of customary justice systems

According to study findings customary justice systems have several commonalities and differences across Ethiopian cultures. They also reveal strengths and weaknesses of customary justice systems.

Common features

The following are among the main common features of indigenous justice institutions and mechanisms:

- High involvement of elders at different stages of conflict resolution and peacemaking process.
- Preference and respect for elders known for their qualities including experience in dispute resolution; knowledge of customary laws, procedures, norms and values of the society; impartiality, respect for rules and people; the ability of listening and speaking politely; honesty and tolerance.
- Indigenous dispute resolution practices focus on restoring social relationships, harmony, and peaceful coexistence.

Differences

Indigenous justice systems also have differences in terms of hierarchies, procedures and level of complexities. For example,

- In some cultural settings, conflict resolution mechanisms involve several hierarchies and complicated procedures;
- The compositions and responsibilities of council of elders also vary from society to society. For example, different types of elders address different forms of disputes in some cultural settings; whereas the same body of elders deals with various types of disputes in other settings.

Reading

Getachew Assefa and Alula Pankhurst (2008) have outlined ten major characteristics of indigenous dispute resolution in Ethiopia. Public participation, voluntary and consensual proceedings, and forgiveness and compensation are among the major features listed by the authors. Read the last chapter Grassroots Justice in Ethiopia (2008) edited by Alula Pankhurst and Getachew Assefa take note on major characteristics of indigenous dispute resolution; their advantages and limitations in Ethiopia.

Strengths of customary justice institutions

- Incur limited cost in terms of time and resources/money; elders do not request payment for their services; fines and compensation are relatively small;
- Conflict resolution process are held in public spaces in the community; different parties (victims, offenders and community members) participate in the process; decisions are communicated in public;
- Decisions are easily enforced through community-based sanctions including social exclusion; compliance ensured through blessings and the threat of curses;
- Customary systems aimed at restoring community cohesion, social relations, collective spirit and social solidarity
- Rely on respect for elders, the tradition of forgiveness, transferring compensations, embedded in indigenous beliefs.

Limitations of customary justice institutions

- Limitations related to protecting and safeguarding women's rights. Indigenous justice institutions are dominated by men. For example, the council of elders is not open to elderly women. Women are excluded from participation at customary courts and assemblies with a few exceptions.
- Indigenous institutions of dispute resolution and peacemaking are effective to resolve dispute and restore peace within the same ethnic group. Their potential in resolving inter-ethnic conflicts and restoring long-lasting peace is very limited.

Elders of neighboring ethnic groups work together in times of inter-ethnic conflicts and settle disputes. However, indigenous institutions of conflict resolution have limitations in restoring long-lasting peace when conflicts occur between parties from two or more ethnic groups.

- How do you explain this problem?
- Is there a possibility of crafting hybrid institutions to resolve disputes occurring between different ethnic groups? Discuss this issue among your classmates.

6.2.2 Inter-ethnic conflict resolution institutions

As noted above, one of the weaknesses of indigenous institution of peacemaking is their limitation in resolving inter-ethnic conflicts. However, there are some example of inter-ethnic conflict resolution institutions in some parts of Ethiopia. Abbo Gereb is one of the indigenous institutions that address inter-ethnic conflicts. It is a dispute resolution institution in Rayya and Wajirat district, Southern Tigray. Abbo Gereb, literally means the father of the river Gerewo. Abbo Gereb serves to settle disputes between individuals or groups from highland areas of Tigray and lowland areas of Afar. Conflict between the two groups often arises because of dispute over grazing land or water resources, particularly in dry season. When conflict arises between parties from two ethnic groups, notable elders from Tigray and Afar come together to

resolve the dispute and restore peaceful relations. Most of the elders involved in inter-ethnic conflict resolutions are bilingual: speaking Tigrigna and Afar (Shimeles and Taddese 2008).

Ethnographic findings also reveal the existence of inter-ethnic conflict resolution mechanisms when conflicts arise between Afar, Issa, Tigrayans and Argobba. The mechanisms of inter-ethnic disputes have different names. It is called Xinto among the Afar, Edible among the Issa, Gereb among the Tigrayans, and Aboroge among the Amhara (Alula and Getachew, 2008).

Although we have some studies on indigenous institutions of inter-ethnic conflict resolution, this area is not well-studied.

- Do you know institutions/mechanisms of conflict resolution that address inter-ethnic conflicts? Bring your experience and knowledge to class discussion!

6.3 Women's role in conflict resolution and peacemaking

Ethiopian women participate in the process of dispute settlement in exceptional cases. For example, in some cultures, women participate in dispute settlement processes when cases are related to marriage and women's issues. Despite these weaknesses, women are not completely excluded for indigenous systems of governance, conflict resolution, and peacemaking activities. In some societies, women use their own institutions to exercise power, protect their rights, and actively participate in peacemaking activities. The next section discusses the role of women in conflict resolution and peacemaking.

The elderly have been playing an important role in settling disputes and restoring peace. Their words and instructions were highly respected across cultures in Ethiopia. Intra and inter-ethnic conflicts have become common in our country in recent years.

- What do you think are the causes of these conflicts?
- Is it related to the decline of respect for the elderly in recent times?
- Or has the culture of peaceful coexistence deteriorated?

One of the limitations of customary justice systems, as noted above, is the marginalization of women. In most cases, indigenous institutions of conflict resolution are dominated by men. This does not mean that women are completely excluded from conflict resolution and peacemaking activities. Three examples that illustrate the role of women in conflict resolution and peacemaking are outlined below. The examples show the role of women in peacemaking describing three women's institutions: the Yakka of the Sidama, the Don Kachel of the Agnuak, and the Debarte of Tigray. Read the descriptions presented below and discuss issues related to women's role in peacemaking in Ethiopia.

Women's peacemaking sticks[1]

Sidama women have two instruments of power: the Yakka and the Siqqo. The Yakka is women's association or unity group. The Siqqo is a stick that symbolizes peace and women honor. The Siqqoand the Yakka are closely associated. Mobilizing the Yakka and holding the Siqqo, Sidama women stand for their customary rights. They do this, for example, when a woman is beaten up by her husband or a pregnant woman is mistreated. For example, if a man prohibits his wife from Yakka participation, the women group imposes a fine on him. The fine could be an ox. If a woman is ill-treated by her husband, the Yakka leader (known as Qaritte) mobilizes the Yakka and leads them to the house of the man. The husband would not have a choice when he is surrounded by the Yakka holding their Siqqo shouting and singing. If he is found guilty, the man would be forced to slaughter a sheep and give part of it to the Yakka. Sidama women also use their Siqqo to make peace between quarrelling parties. Oromo women also have a peace stick called Sinqee. Sinqee serves the purpose of protecting women's rights and making peace. Quarrelling men stop fighting when a woman stands between them holding her Sinqee.

The function of women's peacemaking institutions such as *Siqqo* has been declining. There are attempts to revive these institutions. The *Walda Sinqee* Association was established to promote the use of the *Sinqee* as a means of conflict resolution. The Association provides: refugee centers, legal and financial support, and capacity building trainings for abused women. *Sinqee* associations are now recognized and supported by women's affairs and culture and tourism offices in Oromia.

Is strengthening women's institutions important to foster peacemaking in Ethiopia?

Do you know other women's peacemaking institutions in other parts of Ethiopia? Discuss this issue in some detail

Don Kachel: Agnuak women peacemaking institution

Women in many regions of Ethiopia play an important role in peacemaking. Agnuak women have a peacemaking institution known as Don Kachel (IIRR, 2009, p. 28). Literally, Don Kachel means 'let us all live in peace'. It involves a peace-making movement initiated by Jaye, a group of wise and elderly Agnuak women. The Jaye start a peace-making movement based on information gathered through women's networking. The Jaye gather information about potential conflicts from different sources, including gossips spread in the community. The Jaye quickly act upon receiving information about, for example, a heated argument that could lead to conflict and fighting. The Jaye call the disputing parties for a meeting to settle the dispute. A few neutral observers will also be invited to monitor the process of the meeting. After examining the arguments of the two parties, the Jaye give their verdict. The party that caused the conflict request for forgiveness in public and pay some compensation. A sheep or goat is slaughtered after the conflict resolved; the meat is cooked and shared by participants of the meeting. Finally the Jaye would announce the meeting is over, the problem resolved, using these words 'Now let us all live in peace together!' The practice of Don Kachel is currently being adopted by other ethnic groups including the Nuer, Mejenger, Opo, and Komo.

The role of women as mothers is highly respected in Ethiopia. At times of potential conflict, women, bearing their breast, would say the following to stop conflicts: *'please stop quarreling for the sake of my breast that feeds you!* 'Women use powerful words such as '*batebahuh tutie'* in Amharic speaking areas to influence quarrelling individuals. Younger people used to respect the words of mothers and the elderly.

- What do you observe in today's Ethiopia?
- How far the youth respect words of mothers and parents?
- How do younger people respond to advice of the elderly?
- Where are we heading in this regard?

Women's institution of reconciliation: Raya-Azebo, Tigray

Elderly and highly respected women in a village in Raya-Azebo, Tigray established a reconciliation institution called the Debarte. The Debarte plays an important role in avoiding harms associated with the culture of revenge. A man may kill another man in a fight. The incident would trigger the feeling of revenge among male relatives of the murdered man. In such a tense situation, the wife of the killer requests for the Debarte intervention. The Debarte quickly start their intervention to stop the act of revenge. The Debarte instruct the murderer's wife to gathering her female relatives together. The wife and her female relatives get ready wearing their netela upside down and covering their hair with black cloths to show their grief and regret. After these preparations, the Debarte lead the female relatives of the killer to the home of the murdered man. The women cry loudly while walking to their destination. As they come near to the home of the killed person, they utter the following words: 'Abyetye ezgio! Abyetye ezgio!' 'Oh God help us! God help us! Upon their arrival at the compound of the victim, the Debarte kneel down and cover their heads with the dust of the compound. They beg the relatives/family of the murdered man to give up revenge and consider forgiveness. Initially, the relatives may not respond to the request; however, they will change their mind and open the door to show their consent for reconciliation. After persuading the victim's relatives to give up revenge, the Debarte give the way for elders who start the peace-making process.

Reflect your views on the following questions

- What do you think about the contribution of the *Debarte* in avoiding revenge and making peace?
- Do you know other women's institutions involved in making peace?
- Do you think that women could play an important role in peacemaking in the current situation of Ethiopia?

6.4 Legal pluralism: interrelations between customary, religious and state legal systems

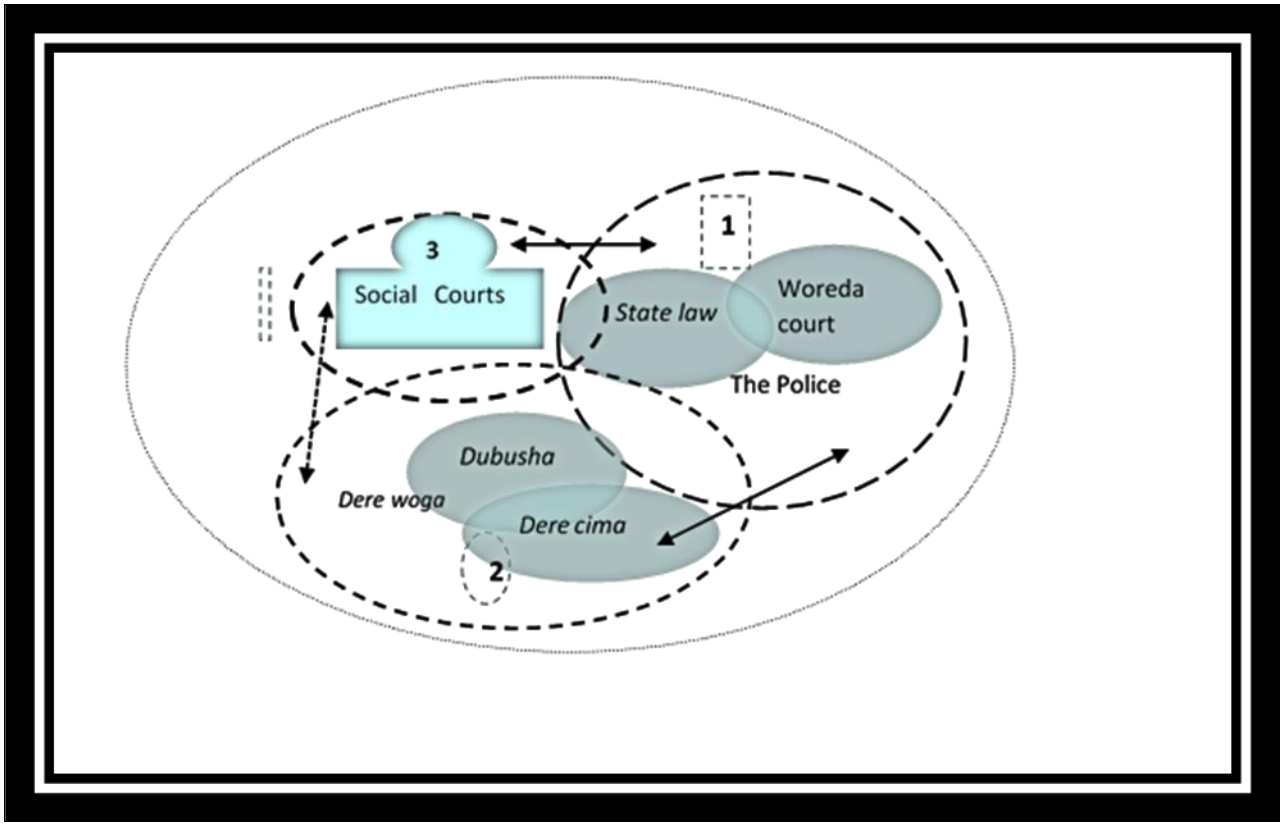
Legal pluralism is an important concept in disciplines that study legal issues. It refers to the existence of two or more legal or justice systems in a given society or country. Legal pluralism indicates the co-existence of multiple legal systems working side-by-side in the same society. Pluralism as a normative concept also refers to a system that recognizes other norms emanating outside state institutions along with a state legal standards. Legal pluralism is evident in the Ethiopian context as well. The existence of multiple ethnic groups in Ethiopia has not only made the country home to diverse cultures but also, a place of diverse legal systems. Multiple legal institutions, including customary laws and courts, state laws and courts, and religious laws and courts (e.g., the Sharia Law) work side-by-side in most parts of the country. The 1995 Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) also grants specific rights to ethnic groups, which ultimately involves the recognition of indigenous legal systems. Additionally, the FDRE Constitution provides some spaces for religious and customary laws and courts to address personal and family cases. The following two Articles show this reality.

- In accordance with provisions to be specified by law, a law giving recognition to marriage concluded under systems of religious or customary laws may be enacted (Article 34(4).
- Religious and customary courts that had state recognition and functioning prior to the adoption of the Constitution shall be organized on the basis of recognition accorded to them by the Constitution. (Article 78(5))

Legal pluralism is a pervasive phenomenon in Ethiopia. This is because a single legal system does not have a capability to address all legal cases and maintaining peace and order. Contemporary studies (e.g. Kairedin, 2018) indicate that the relation between the various legal systems is characterized by cooperation and competition. The interactions of legal systems also display contradictory perspectives and cross into territories claimed by the other. And hence, the legal

sphere seems characterized by legal hybridism indicating one cannot stand without the cooperation of the other legal systems.

The following justice institutions work side-by-side in most parts of the country, especially in remote and rural areas: state/formal justice institutions, customary justice institutions, and religious courts. The following figure shows the formal and customary justice institutions working side-by-side in one of the districts in Gamo zone.



Source: Getaneh Mehari and Getnet Tadele 2015

Three elements are portrayed in the figure above: 1) state justice institutions including state law, district court, and the police; 2) customary institutions including *dere woga*/customary law, *dubusha*/customary court, and *dere cima*/council of elders; and 3) social court attached to each *kebele* administration. The picture will be more complex if we add religious courts such as the Sharia court which is very important in regions such as Afar, Somali, and Harari.

Reflect your views on the following questions

- What are the advantages and disadvantages of legal pluralism (having multiple justice/legal systems/institutions)?
- Do you think that state justice institutions and customary justice institutions support each other to maintain peace and order?

Discuss these and related issues among your classmates.

6.6 Unit Summary

Dear students, in this unit, we have discussed issues related to institutions of indigenous/local governance, conflict resolution and peacemaking. We cannot completely avoid conflicts in the social world. Societies have devised different institutions and mechanisms to control, manage and resolve conflicts with the purpose of maintaining peace and social order. We have also discussed the role of women and women's institutions in calming quarrelling parties and making peace in different cultural contexts. Unit seven, the last unit of this module, will focus on indigenous knowledge systems and practices.

Suggested Reading Materials

Alula Pankhurst and Getachew Assefa (Eds.). 2008. Grassroots Justice in Ethiopia: The contribution of customary dispute resolution. Addis Ababa: French Center of Ethiopian Studies.

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Getaneh Mehari. 2014. Betwixt and Between? Culture and women's rights in the context of multiple legal and institutional settings, the Dorze case, south-western Ethiopia. PhD Dissertation, Addis Ababa University.

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Getachew Senishaw. 2014. The Nexus of Indigenous Ecological Knowledge, Livelihood Strategies, and Social Institutions in Midland Gedeo Human-Environment Relations. PHD dissertation, Department of Social Anthropology, Addis Ababa University.

International Institute of Rural Reconciliation (IIRR). 2009. Culture at Crossroads: Ethiopian women in peace-making. Nairobi, Kenya.

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Shimeles Gizaw and Taddese Gessese (2008). Customary Dispute Resolution in Tigray Region: Case Studies from Three Districts. In Grassroots Justice in Ethiopia edited by Alula Pankhurst and Getachew Assefa.

Tarekegn Adebo and Hannah Tsadik (Eds.) Making peace in Ethiopia: Five cases of traditional mechanisms of conflict resolution. Addis Ababa: Master Printing Press.

UNIT SEVEN

INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS

Dear Students!

You have discussed *customary* or *local governance systems and peacemaking* in Unit 6, which is an important aspect of IKS. You also need to recall important elements of the definition of the concept of *Culture* as discussed in Chapter 3, and connect them to IKS as discussed in this chapter. Dear students, as this is a modular course, your active participation is of vital importance.

Contents of the Unit:

This Unit of the module deals with indigenous knowledge systems (IKS). We start with the conceptualizations of IKS followed by an outline of some basic features of IKS. We then present a brief discussion of the significances of IKS. The Unit also outlines major domains of IKS and shows how they are connected to each other. Finally, we examine challenges associated with the decline and erosion of indigenous knowledge and the need for the protection and promoting relevant IKS.

Unit Learning Outcomes:

Up on the successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

- Conceptualize (clearly define) IKS
- Understand the significances of indigenous knowledge
- Describe domains of IKS and show interconnection among the various domains of IKS

- Examine the challenges facing indigenous knowledge
- Suggest viable ways of promoting and protecting IK

7.1 Definition of concepts

In this sub-section, first you will learn a couple of names referring to IKS. Second, you will discuss the various definitions of IKS. Now, let us start with discussion of the various terms used to refer to indigenous knowledge systems in the literature.

7.1.1 Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS)

Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) is called after different but closely related names, which include: ‘folk knowledge', 'local knowledge', 'non-formal knowledge', 'cultural knowledge', 'indigenous technical knowledge', 'traditional ecological knowledge', and 'traditional knowledge'. All these terms are essentially similar but they differ in scope, domains and features of IK that they focus on. For instance, while ‘cultural knowledge’ is more general and broader in scope, ‘traditional ecological knowledge’ is more specific as it focuses on a single domain of IK, that is, ecology or the environment. On the other hand, such terms as indigenous, folk and local suggest ‘originality’ or uniqueness of knowledge to a particular culture or people living in a particularly geographic area. That is, IK emerge and develop within a particular community (culture) and living in a particular place (geographic context).

Similarly, IK is defined slightly differently in the literature. Mangetane (2001) defined IKS as *technical* insight of wisdom gained and developed by *people in a particular locality* through years of *careful observation and experimentation* with the phenomena around them. For Warren (1991) Indigenous knowledge systems refer to a body of *empirical* knowledge and beliefs handed down through generations of long-time *inhabitants of a specific locale*, by cultural transmission, about the relationship of living beings with each other and their environment.

The World Bank (1998) refers to IK as a large body of *knowledge and skills* which is developed outside the formal system; while Hoppers (2005) defines IK as “a totality of knowledge and practices, whether explicit or implicit, used in the management of socioeconomic, ecological and spiritual facets of life. Indigenous knowledge is also defined as the knowledge that people in a given community have developed over

time, and that continues to develop. It is based on experience, often tested over centuries of use, adapted to local culture and environment, dynamic and changing (International Institute of Rural Reconstruction, IIRR, 1996).

In Sum, indigenous knowledge constitutes the body of context-evolved cultural knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and practices transmitted from one generation to the other. Indigenous knowledge is perceived as having developed over time as a *dynamic response to the challenges of survival* and development in a specific context (e.g., Lewontin, 1991). Socio-cultural values are central to our actions and practices (both collective and everyday personal behaviour) and they may include:

- ✓ **Socio-economic Values**: Values related to intergenerational relationships, gender equality, tolerance for diversity, interpersonal relationships and respectfulness, hospitality, reciprocity, and interdependence, values for productivity, wealth, and hard work
- ✓ **Moral Values** –collective codes of conduct regarding *truthfulness*, mutual help; helping the needy
- ✓ **Environmental values**: respect and concern for natural environments-forest, sacred lands, sacred trees
- ✓ **Political values:** egalitarianism, respect for laws, fairness, equality, rights and duty, lawfulness,

Reflect on the following questions

What are the major elements of Indigenous Knowledge Systems embedded in its various definitions?

What do the different names given to the IKS suggest?

What does the concept 'system' in IKS refers to?

7.2. Features of Indigenous Knowledge

Some of the key features of IK are already embedded in the various definitions presented in the preceding sub-section. These features are apparent particularly when IK is contrasted with the formal or international knowledge system generated

by universities, global and national research institutions and private research firms. Ellen and Harris (1996) identified the following special features of indigenous knowledge that distinguish it broadly from formal or international knowledge. Accordingly**,** IK is**:**

a. L**ocal** (not universal). It is rooted in a particular community; it is a set of experiences generated by people living in those communities. The term local particularly signifies that IK is context- based grounded in a particular culture and associated with a certain geographic area or place. Therefore, when transferred to other places, there is a potential risk of dislocating IK.

b. T**acit** knowledge, that is, not explicit or codified. The tacit nature of IK suggest that people may develop and carry knowledge and transfer it between generations using practices, myths, rituals and symbols (and belief and value systems) of a particular domain but may not be able to articulate them terms equivalent to scientific categories or in foreign words that fit a particular academic jargon or category.

c. T**ransmitted orally**, or through imitation and demonstration. Although codifying IK is generally possible, care should be taken since codifying it may lead to the loss of some of its properties.

d. E**xperiential or empirical rather than theoretical knowledge**. Experience and trial and error, tested in the rigorous 'laboratory' of survival of local communities constantly reinforce IK.

e. L**earned through repetition**, which is a defining characteristic of tradition even when new knowledge is added. Repetition aids in the retention and reinforcement of IK.

f. **Constantly changing**, that is, IK is not static. Rather IK is dynamic in its nature. It is produced as well as reproduced, discovered as well as lost.

Reflect on the following questions

- Can you list some of the distinguishing features Indigenous peoples?
- Where and how you think IK is stored and transmitted from one

generation to the next?

- What do you understand by tacit knowledge?
- Provide some examples of tacit knowledge.

7.3 Significance of indigenous knowledge

This sub-section attempts to answer a question: *why do Socio-cultural Anthropologists study IKS*? Socio-cultural Anthropologists study IKS for two main purposes. First, anthropologists study IKS for the sake of understanding local peoples' knowledge as an end by itself. IKS of the local and indigenous communities need to be documented and understood, and Anthropologists learn from these communities how they produce knowledge, store and transmit it from generation to generation. Knowledge being 'power' and an important tool of survival, Anthropologists also examine changes and continuities in the process of production and transmission of IKS, and its implications for the concerned local communities. This is particularly important in the contemporary world where scientific or codified knowledge is being privatized and 'owned' by powerful entities through such powerful international mechanisms as patent rights and intellectual property rights.

Second, Socio-cultural Anthropologists study IKS for the sake of application. It is now well known that IKS is the basis for local-level decision making in agriculture, health care, food production preparation, education, natural-resource management, and many other activities among rural communities. According to Paula (1995), indigenous knowledge can help find the best solution to a development challenges. For example, familiarity with local knowledge can help agricultural and health extension workers and researchers understand and communicate better with local people.

Sillitoe (1998), citing several sources, argues that 'it is increasingly acknowledged beyond anthropology that [local communities] have their own effective ''science'' and resource use practices and that to assist them we need to understand something about their knowledge and management systems'. It is in this context that the widespread adoption of bottom-up participation (community participation) as opposed to top-down modernisation approaches has opened up opportunities for anthropology in development'.

In this regard, anthropologists study IKS in order to work in collaboration with other disciplines (e.g., Medicine and health workers, Agriculture, forestry/ecologists, soil scientists etc.) and in order to brokering information between local communities and

scientists to be able to engage in more productive, appropriate and environmentally sound and sustainable development and other forms of interventions. Anthropologist can help interpret farmers' local knowledge, identify their needs/priorities and help shape intervention incorporate IK into research and application.

In this context, IKS can be used for application in two main ways. On one hand, it can be used as an option or alternative to scientific or Western Knowledge systems when IKS are found to ensure cost-effective, efficient and appropriate methods of improving the lives of local communities or solving their perceived socio-economic, environmental or health problems. IK offers local people and their development workers more options in designing new projects or addressing specific problems. Instead of relying on expensive imported Western technologies, people in the developing nations can choose from readily available indigenous knowledge options.

It is known widely accepted among anthropologists and development workers that one cannot overlook indigenous knowledge's ability to provide effective alternatives to the Western knowledge system. Indigenous knowledge may help identify cost-effective and sustainable mechanisms for poverty alleviation that are locally manageable and meaningful. It increases and enhances livelihood options, revitalize agriculture, increase food security, improve health and promote a sense of cultural pride within the community (Kudzayi et al, 2013). Nicolas (2000) further states that indigenous institutions, indigenous technology, and low-cost approaches can increase the efficiency of development programs because IK is a locally owned and managed resource.

On the other hand, where appropriate, we can combine indigenous and Western knowledge systems with the understanding that development and adoption of appropriate technologies become more accessible, acceptable and effective when it is based on (or informed by) indigenous knowledge (see Fig. 1). That is, the understanding and application of IK helps contextualize (culturally and environmentally) scientific findings or innovation in order to produce solutions, which are culturally appropriate, environmentally sustainable, and economically sound. Utilizing IK in conjunction with scientific knowledge helps not just to increase the sustainability and efficiency, which are key elements of development interventions, of

development efforts. It also contributes to the empowerment of local communities who are the producers and owners of IKS.

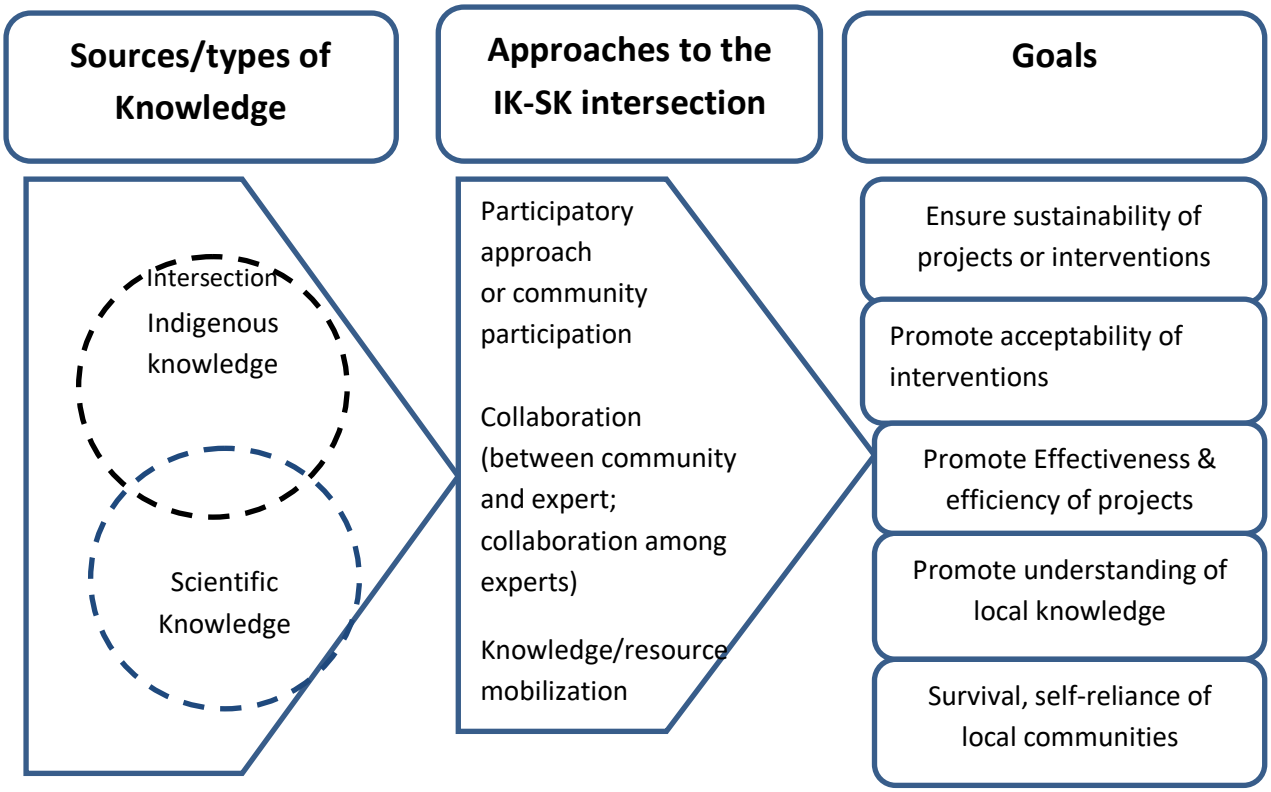

Figure 1: IK-LK interaction and its significances

The incorporation of IKS, where such incorporation is found to be relevant and appropriate, into scientific knowledge is fundamental for sustainability and acceptance of development, environmental management or health related projects (see Fig. 1). According to the 1998/99 World Development Report, knowledge, not capital, is the key to sustainable social and economic development. Building on local knowledge, the basic component of any country's knowledge system, is the first step to mobilize such capital to be able to make scientific knowledge relevant to and acceptable by local communities. In this regard, a study of 121 rural water projects in 49 countries found that 70 percent succeeded when the intended beneficiaries participated (indigenous knowledge incorporated) in project design, compared to a 10 percent success rate among programs where they did not.[1]

[1]1998/99 World development Report: Knowledge for Development.

In sum, indigenous knowledge has been (and still is) serving local communities make decisions about activities, such as agriculture, education, health, environment and many other aspects of socio-cultural life. Yet, it is important to note that there has always been cross-fertilization between indigenous knowledge and scientific knowledge systems, and different aspects of people's life have been undertaken at intersection of the two knowledge systems. This is particularly true the current globalized world where the interaction between the two knowledge systems is becoming more and more intense. That is why collaboration between scientists and experts on one hand, 'experts' of IKS (local communities) on the other, appear to be a viable option in the area of development, heath, environment, peace building, among others.

In this regard , social scientists in general, and socio-cultural anthropologist in particular, have responsibilities to study IKS and help communities and 'outside experts' make decisions: (1) whether a particular domain of indigenous knowledge and scientific knowledge systems are compatible and complementary and when to use indigenous knowledge, along with or combined with western- based knowledge to be able to create development solutions that are culturally acceptable to the community; (2) When to use indigenous knowledge systems as alternative to western knowledge systems provided that they are more accessible, less costly and more compatible with a society's our socio-economic cultural and ecological contexts; (3) when communities use indigenous knowledge as a tool of survival (self-reliance) when they don't have access to or control over western knowledge system due economic or politico-legal reasons.

Reflect on the following questions

- Why do we study indigenous knowledge?
- How do you think indigenous knowledge is an important part of the lives of the local community from where you come? Can you provide some specific examples of IK and their respective significance in your community?
- How do you relate IK to success or failure of development interventions?

7.4. Domains of Indigenous Knowledge

In this sub-section, we will briefly discuss major domains of indigenous knowledge systems. Indigenous Knowledge Systems consist of a number of domains or slots. Knowledge being generally understood as a tool of survival for human beings (and societies), each domain of IKS is concerned with an important aspect of human life. At the same time, each domain of indigenous knowledge systems affects and is being affected by other domains. That is, domains of indigenous knowledge are interrelated thereby having a 'systemic' character as suggested by the term '*system'* in indigenous knowledge system.

Some of the IK are already apparent from the discussions in the preceding Units. For instance, IKS of local governance, law, conflict resolution and peace building practices have already been discussed in Unit 6. Some examples of this domain of IKS are embedded in such institutions as the *Gada* system among the Oromo, *Luwa* among the Sidama, *Sera* among many communities in the southern Ethiopia; *Gondoro* in Gedeo, and *Yejoka* among the Gurage. Other domains, which have not been presented in this module, for sake of brevity, include IKS related to information exchange and communication (e.g., the *dagu* among the Afar) and those related to architecture and house construction. In what follows we outline some of the major domains of IK. Some of the domains are combined since they are closely interrelated with each other.

Agriculture (livelihoods and food security): The domestication of plants and animal started some 10, 000 years ago following human beings' extended interactions with natural environment. Since then human beings have been engaged in conscious decisions regarding selective breeding of plants and animals, and production and distribution of food. Among crops selected and domesticated by early Ethiopian farmers include: *teff*, *enest* and *Nug*. The domestication of coffee is also highly associated with Ethiopia. Crop selection and domestication Crop domestication and production is based on meticulous indigenous knowledge of agronomic**,** metrological and climatic conditions. Detailed indigenous knowledge of weather patterns (including weather forecasting) is an important component of cropping calendars and livestock raising for rural communities.

Indigenous knowledge related to agriculture and livelihood activates also includes knowledge and practices about farming techniques, soil categories and soil fertility. Ethiopian farmers are known for their skills of soil management and soil fertility enhancement. In this regard, a *stone-terracing* among the Konso of southern Ethiopia has been recognized as a UNESCO world heritage. Farmers also use crop rotations, organic fertilizers, and fallowing as soil regeneration practices or to enhance soil fertility through locally available and low cost means. The Gedeo people of southern Ethiopia, who experience one of the highest population densities in the country, are also well known for their *agro-forestry* farming practice.

Local and indigenous communities have also been developing farming tools and technics in pursuit of their livelihood. For instance, Ethiopian highlanders have developed the *plough complex* hundreds of years back by combining tools made from iron, leather straps, and wood with animal (oxen) and human power. They have also developed complex indigenous food processing, preparation, storage and preservation mechanisms. Fermentation technics, which are important elements of food preparation and preservation mechanisms, are widely used in Ethiopia. These include *enset* processing and storage; fermentation and baking of injera and bread, fermentation and brewing or distillation process of different types of drinks).

Indigenous/Traditional Medicine and Healing Practices: Indigenous medicinal practices, also widely known as Traditional Medicine (TM), consist of both human and veterinary medicine. They constitute important components of health and healing in the developing parts of the world. It has been determined that 80% of the population in Africa makes use of Traditional Medicine either alone or in conjunction with conventional medicine (e.g. Yua et al. 2016).

Traditional Medicine and healing practices deal with both physical and emotional ailments, and are known for being *holistic* or for offering a holistic treatment for its users. , Traditional medicine and healing practices include treating wounds and bone setting, preparation and administration of different types of mainly plant-based medicine. One of the well-known plant-based traditional medicines in Ethiopia is *Koso*, which is prepared from flowers of the *Koso* tree (**Hagenia abyssinica)** and used to treat tapeworm infection**.**

Indigenous knowledge of medicinal plants has not only been sources of medicine for local use but also served as sources for the development modern medicine. It is to be noted that that many of plant-originated drugs in clinical medicine today were derived from Traditional Medicine and that the many valuable drugs derived from plants were discovered through their application in TM (see Yua et al. 2016)

Ecological/environment-related IKS: This constitutes an important domain as it is particularly related to many other fundamental domains of IKS. Indigenous knowledge of the ecosystem, which signifies the interrelationships or interactions among the different elements of the physical and biological environment-, is fundamental for such other domains related to agriculture, climate and weather patterns, and traditional medicinal practices (see Fig. 2).

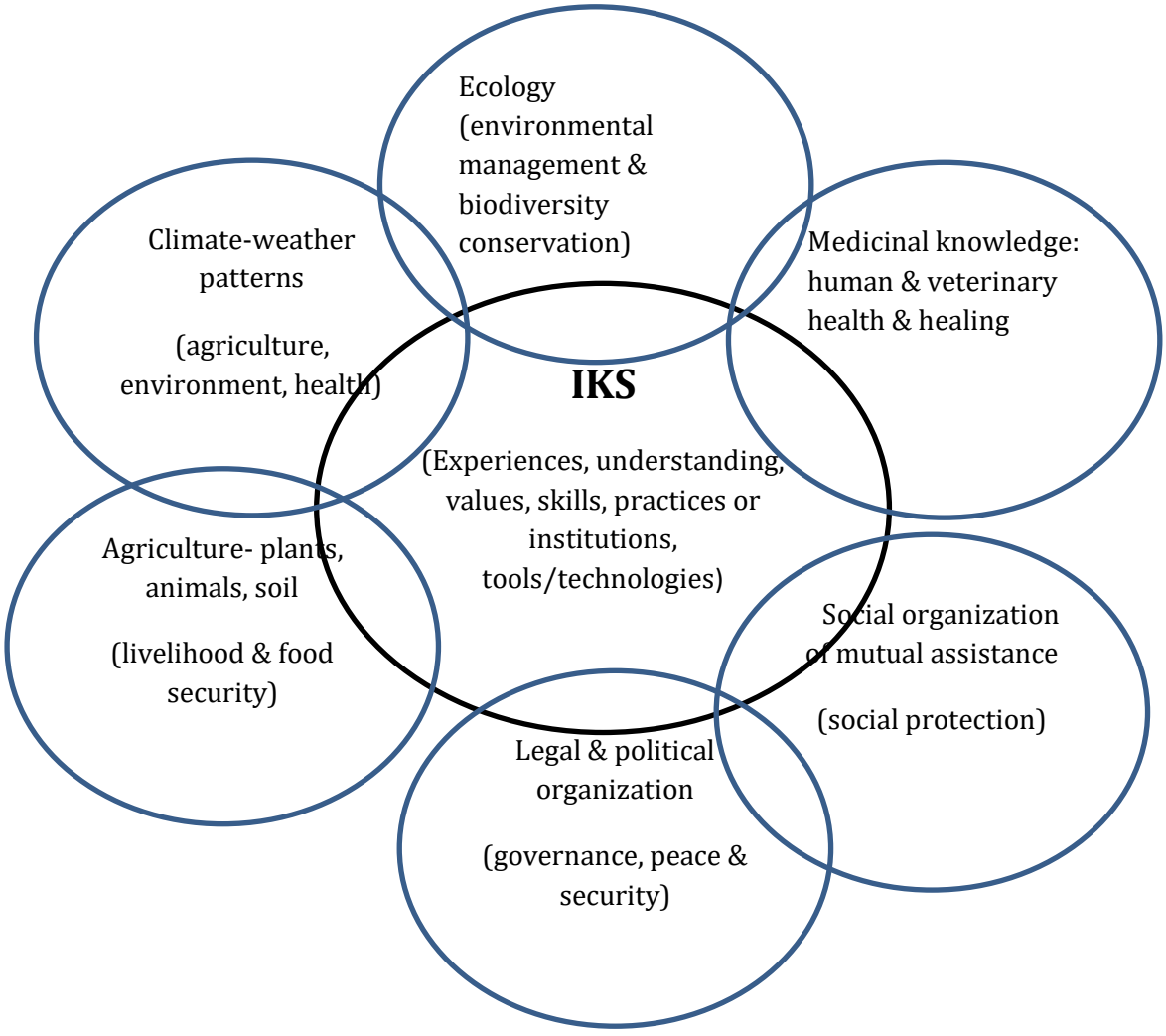

Figure 2: Some domains of IKS and their interrelation

Local people have accumulated knowledge of the environment due to their close and long term interaction with it. As result, the co-evolution of culture and the environment, and hence the association between cultural diversity and biodiversity, has been of particular interest for anthropologist. The Global Biodiversity Strategy in its principles revealed that cultural diversity is closely linked to biodiversity and its associated ecosystems as a whole (Warren 1992). That is biodiversity and cultural diversity are mutually constitutive in that local people's knowledge of biodiversity, its use and management rests in cultural diversity, and that conserving biodiversity helps to strengthen and maintain cultural integrity and diversity.

Local people have detailed knowledge of plants and animals (including their behaviour), and changes and continuities in their surroundings, which is very important for natural resource use and management (conservation). It is to be noted that people are interested in natural environment due to the various but interconnected values. These include material (economic or livelihood) value, environmental values, moral or religious values.

As a result sustainable management of ecosystems and biodiversity can be found in indigenous and local communities (Johns & Eyzaguirre 2002). In this regard, a large percentage of the earth's genetic diversity has been maintained and managed through farmer's IKS (Dewes, 1993). Studies have indicated that, communities in Africa and other parts of the world have played active roles in generating knowledge of their environment and conserving natural resources (Warren 1992, 1997). This particularly important in the current world where natural resources depilation and decline or loss of biodiversity due to climate changes, population growth and culture of consumerism, and where environmental assessment, resource management, local conservation of biological resources are becoming important components of development planning.

Social organizational of mutual support: Indigenous knowledge systems enable people to develop strategies for handling household and communal activities (Mangetane et al., 2001). Human beings are social by their very nature. No one individual or family is fully sufficient in all aspects of life and people have to engage in cooperative and reciprocal activities. Indigenous practices equivalent to such modern concepts as cooperation, social protection, social security and social

insurance have been developed employed by local communities. For example, in Ethiopia farmers have been using *Debo* and *Jige*, as forms of cooperation, in order to perform agricultural and other activities for generations. They have been serving as important uniting forces for communal activities. Similarly, local communities, both in rural and urban settings, have been using *iddir* and *equb* in lieu of social insurance or social protection for a long period of time.

These labour and resource pooling experiences and customs can serve as important basis for such contemporary practices as participatory development, participatory planning, and community participation. Understanding of local knowledge of members of a community provides essential inputs, including direct labor to operations. "This deployment of manpower is strongly supported by IKS, which is composed of technologies, rules, information, approaches, and relationships that are vital to sustainable development" (Kalawole, 2001).

Reflect on the following questions

- Select two domains of IK and explain how they are interrelated.
- Which domain of IKS is the most clearly visible one in your community?
- How are IKS, which are related to social organization of mutual support similar to (or different from) such formal concepts as cooperatives, social protection and social insurance?

7.4. Challenges facing IK and the need for the preservation of IK

It is noted under Sub-section 7.2 that IKS are dynamic by its very nature. Some IK are lost in the process of change while others are created or modified and integrated into the exiting pool of community's IKS. What makes the current changes a challenge to IKS is the rate of erosion the changes are causing to the IKS. The rate

of change and the loss of IK are accelerating due to a number of *interrelated* factors, which include (see Grenier, 1998 for details):

Globalization: This refers to economic, socio-cultural and political interconnection of the world as a result of improvement in communication technologies including transportation infrastructure, digital communications (e.g., internet and mobile revolutions) and satellite technology. You might have heard about the phrase 'global village' referring to how these communications tools virtually brought people living world apart closer to each other. In principle, communications (in the context of globalization) is like a two-way traffic. In practice, however, parts of the world with developed economic and technological capabilities are dominating the process of globalization and making the most out of it. Intense modernization and cultural homogenization (westernization) are leading to loss of IKS and useful traditions in the least developed parts of the world.

Expansion of modern education*:* Modern education is a means of improvement for human life and well-being. Yet, unless it is designed or customized to the need of particular socio-cultural contexts, uncritically accepted modern education could also serves as a major means of th*e* expansion of western culture and values, some disguised scientific knowledge. It is well known that formal education often serves as status symbol particularly in the less developed parts of the world. Having formal schooling is equated with being civilized and acquiring modern knowledge, which is assumed to be superior to indigenous knowledge. This is apparent in official propaganda, until recently, depicting indigenous cultures and methodologies as backward or out of date. In the past, educated locals and outside experts (e.g., social, physical, and agricultural scientists) ignored or underestimated IK, depicting it as primitive, simple, static. Consequently, indigenous beliefs, values, customs, know-how and practices, which served (and will serve) the needs of local communities may be altered and or lost when supplanted or displaced by modern knowledge.

Development approaches*:* The development pursued by states and development partners in the developing countries often follow the modernization approach. Attempts are not only often made to adopt modern knowledge and technologies

uncritically but also to assume them as superior to local knowledge and technologies. For instance, policies promoting generic rice and wheat varieties devalue locally adapted species. Preferences is often given to select (or technologically improved) seed over local see varieties; to chemical fertilizers over organic fertilizers or indigenous means of enhancing soil fertility and to market oriented production over production for household consumption. Such choices are not entirely wrong but become problematic when uncritically undertaken in ways that would challenge sustainable livelihood of the local communities and their long term survival, self-reliance and independence. Dependence on modern seed varieties and use of chemical fertilizers, all of which have to be bought from commercial companies whose rights are protected by patent and intellectual property rights, could make local communities vulnerable to prices or supply fluctuations of these inputs. It could lead to the loss of local crop varieties and diversities. The introduction of market-oriented agricultural and forestry practices focused on mono-cropping is also associated with losses in IK practices, which in turn result in the loss of biodiversity and cultural diversity.

Rapid population growth in the developing countries: The growth of population in western and other economically and technologically advanced societies has either generally been declining or stabilized. On the other hand, high rate of population growth is continuing to be a major socio-economic and environmental issue in less developed countries, particularly in Sub-Saharan African. Population puts pressure on the natural environment as more and more people search for more land to cultivate, which could be accessed by cutting down trees. With poverty, opportunities for short-term gain are selected over environmentally sound local practices. The result could be deforestation and environmental degradations. With deforestation, certain medicinal plants become more difficult to find (and the knowledge or culture associated with the plants would also declines). In this context, the future of IK, that reflects many generations of experience and problem solving by thousands of indigenous people across the globe, is uncertain (Warren, 2004).

From what have outlined and briefly discussed in this sub-section, the need for presentation of IKS is apparent. IKS need to preserve through encouraging its utilization and by identifying and recording it. In order to preserve IK, we must

gather, organize and disseminate it, similar to what we have been doing with Western knowledge (e.g., see Amare, 2009).

The loss of IK would impoverish society because, just as the world needs genetic diversity of species, it needs diversity of knowledge systems (Labelle, 1997). As IK is the key to local-level development, ignoring people's knowledge leads possibly to failure. Similarly, "one should not expect all the expertise for third world development to come from developed nations, academic institutions, multinational corporations or NGOs" (Amare, 2009). In the face of dwindling resources available to African countries, and noting that even the industrialized nation governments cannot provide for all the needs of the people, it has been suggested that IK, and the technical expertise developed there from become vital tools for rural development (Atte, 1989).

Reflect your views on the following questions

- Which are the major factors contributing to or accelerating the loss of IKS?
- Why do we need to preserve indigenous Knowledge?
- How can we preserve IK?

7.6. Unit summary

Dear Students!

In this unit we have addressed the most important concepts, aspects and dimensions of indigenous knowledge as system of knowledge. We have seen that Indigenous knowledge is defined as technical insight of wisdom gained and developed by people in a particular locality through years of careful observation and experimentation with the phenomena around them. IKS is embedded in culture and is described as an integrated pattern of human knowledge, beliefs and behavior. IK as a large body of knowledge and skills which is developed outside the formal system including development planning, environmental assessment, resource management, local conservation of biological resources, and conflict resolution characterized usually by being locally distributed and owned by communities (groups or individuals) as a tacit, repetitive, oral, usually practical and experiential and always in some form of flux. The significance of IK has been being recognized by development actors and practitioners of sustainable development across all levels. Hence, since IK is essential to development, it must be preserved as in being gathered, recorded, organized and disseminated knowledge. Recently, however, IK is facing real multifaceted challenges related to modernization schemes and cultural homogenization attempts including but not exclusively of fast-tracked population growth, economic and market globalization, advances in educational systems, environmental degradation, and top-down development plans and programs.

Suggested Reading Materials

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