



HELLO ANTHROPOLOGY

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1. WHAT IS ANTHROPOLOGY?

Anthropology comes from two greek terms, *anthropos* for man and *logos* for study. Going by the term, it is the study of man.

Anthropology seeks answer to wide variety of questions about humans. For example, Why did humans appear on earth? When did they appear? Where did they appear? How did they appear? How have humans evolved, culturally and biologically? What is the correlation between cultural and biological evolution?

Anthropology not only seeks answer to general questions involving entire humanity, it also seeks answer to questions involving specific human population. Why certain population show high occurrence of a particular disease such as sickle cell anaemia? It tries to understand why a tradition exists and it exists for so long.

It doesn't stop there, it tries to find answers to why and how different population interact the way they do? And how the interaction is like? For example, interaction between tribals and regular city folks.

Since Anthropology is about understanding humans, it is of use in solving practical problems too. For example, if government is formulating policies for tribal people, Anthropologists may be the best people to act as channel of communication so that the interests of no side is ignored.

There are several fields that study humans, such as sociology, psychology, medicine etc, but they all have study humans from a singular perspective, whereas Anthropology study humans from a holistic point of view.

Since, Anthropology is a subject of infinite curiosity, no one definition can be preferred over others. Hence, we study how different scholars have defined it. This is true not only about how we define Anthropology, but about every single thing that we study in Anthropology. Studying Anthropology is like building your own perspective about humans, and this perspective ought to continuously evolve as we keep getting introduced

Paul Broca defined Anthropology as, "*the study of the human group, considered as a whole, in its details, and in relation to the rest of the nature*"

HOW NOT TO STUDY ANTHROPOLOGY?

Anthropology exposes us to a variety of human aspects, their cultures and customs. It's very easy to get judgemental towards others. For example, when exposed to facts such as Chinese foot binding or Nayar marriages, a care has to be taken that we don't judge, rather we understand.

By thinking of ourselves as superior or inferior, or better or worse, we defeat the very purpose of Anthropology. When Europeans thought that it is white man's burden to civilise everyone, they destroyed much of world's indigenous cultures.

Anthropology doesn't mean inaction, rather it calls for action, but not with a feeling of superiority or a sense of judgement.

We will study this in detail later.