

## EDITORIAL

### THE COSMOPOLITAN TURN IN ANTHROPOLOGY

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Along with the transformations of society, anthropology has transmuted over the years. Rather than drawing an organic analogy, I intend to vouchsafe the possibilities of direct or subtle interconnection between the two. The contemporary thoughts and ideologies have certainly informed the theoretical orientations in anthropology. It is a marvel of anthropology, that the discipline has managed well with some of its past social and cultural traditions embodied in concepts and thoughts or ideologies which we may technically call 'anthropological knowledge' (following the idea of anthropology as a body of knowledge). It does not mean that all these concepts or ideas have received equal appreciation in all ages. But, the basic premises have outlived their origins.

The fictional and romantic thoughts of the pre-Renaissance and Renaissance periods soon got streamlined with the scientific spirit of Enlightenment era. This era saw two major divisions in the thinking – one argued for the individualistic and universalistic position of Hume, Kant and Descartes and the other was represented by collective and relativistic position of Hegel, Herder and Vico (Gellner, 1998). However, we may notice the elements of thoughts on the universalism and relativism latent in the works of Greek scholar Herodotus (Eriksen and Nielson, 2001). The idea of collectivism was a necessary invention in the vocabulary of emerging social sciences that had aimed at discovering the laws of society in a manner the natural scientists did attempts at finding the laws of nature (Bandyopadhyay, 2018). This overarching 'natural science model' remained the guiding principle of the discipline until the 'linguistic turn' weakened it. It is interesting to note that anthropology was linguistically rooted for some time under the dominance of the positivistic model of enquiry before it was propelled into post-modern linguistic orbit. The philosophy has always been there, but the recent engagement with the philosophical issues in the theory and methodology of the disciplines appears unprecedented. This may well be termed as the 'Philosophical Turn' in the subject and it subsumes all the theoretical, methodological, linguistic, and moral as well as ethical dimensions of the discipline.

With the 'Philosophical Turn', it is not the fact that anthropology ceases to shun its earlier possessions. Still it continues to conduct inquiries simultaneously following positivistic, logical positivistic, and post-positivistic models, albeit with a mixing of these in different proportions. The debate over

the presentation and representation persists unabated with regard to the taking of relativistic position. The oxymoronic participant observation leads to an epistemological relativism (Spiro, 1994). The risk of running into academic *cul de sac* looms large over the discipline. Therefore, anthropology is to negotiate with the epistemological foregrounding that dictates its positioning in time and space. This is true for anthropology in Europe, in America and also for India.

It is now more important to consider anthropology as an ethno-science of a state or nation at the collapse of the meta-theory. The native anthropologists are claiming more credence than ever before. The knowledge-context existing in a country should define the priorities for the discipline. But, there is a great danger in such propagation. As with world is fast changing with the moving of 'scapes', how rigid could be the insularity. The earlier universalism is again assuming the form of a new avatar in cosmopolitan realities. When cosmopolitanism is a social-cultural reality, then the cosmopolitan anthropology would be a theoretical necessity. Rapport (2007a:267) has remarked:

An existential or cosmopolitan anthropology would encourage us to see being as a universal issue and an individual one; only the symbolic expression differs.

This is in a sense a theoretical response to the imbroglio sired by the 'Writing Culture' and post-writing culture exercises that reduced anthropology to an 'emic ethnography' or mediating practice to amplify the native voices religiously. However, one cannot deny the substantial critique caused by this influential tide in anthropology. The individual must be rescued if we were to salvage the spirit of Enlightenment, the progenitor of anthropology (Evans-Pritchard, 1962). Besides this, a meaningful linkage between individual and collective was essential, otherwise the nativists would turn anthropology into entirely a political project, and the essential human value will be lost.

One may posit a critique at this juncture by terming the cosmopolitan anthropology a western project. The west might have scared about the loss of much of its pristine pasture of fieldwork places. Therefore convincing others about the cosmopolitanism is being done with an ulterior motive. It is another name for market capitalism fomented by multinationals. This would gain some ground owing to the uneven exchange scholarships

across the world. Whether you believe in this or not, you should not undermine the potential rationality which cosmopolitan anthropology advocates for the entire discipline. We may differ in our priorities, but we should not denigrate the methodological worth our discipline is offering. Accordingly we shall invent our vocabularies, chart out our course and fix up priorities. Let others be informed *vis a vis* we learn, too. We need not worry much about the future of the discipline if we continue to serve our vocation dedicatedly. Now, introspection is well needed as the time requires more conscious people. The intuitive judgment of the individual should not be missed off in anthropology. This changed perception is echoed in the words of Rapport(2007a:268):

“The anthropologists disinters a *complementarity* of individual introspective practice, recognizes the ways in which the “subtleties, inflections, and varieties of individual consciousness”(Cohen) of key informants are delivered in social action. This is not quite the same as saying that anthropologists empathize with informants, that, immersing themselves in the routine habitus of their forms of life, they feel able to hazard a guess at their subjectivities – although this might also be the case. Rather the introspecting anthropologist accedes to recognition of the role that individual self consciousness *mutually* plays in human life: the significant oscillation that takes place between introspection and projection out into the world, between self –consciousness and action (Rapport, 2005).”

### **PANACEA OR CHIMERA: THE PROMISES AHEAD**

“Does ‘cosmopolitanism’ offer something new?” asked Nigel Rapport who has himself given answer to the question in the following words (Rapport,2007b: 223):

“ ‘cosmopolitanism’ usually identifies a certain anthropological agenda. One does not intend a master-trope or panacea, but the concept is workable for claiming a particular history of inscribing the human, and a future project”.

It is true that Cosmopolitanism is neither a panacea nor a chimera, rather it is existential. It circumscribes real, hyperreal and unreal which envelope our quotidian existence. Like the Matryoshka doll our life is multiple layers of pluralities. Anthropology tries to account these lives within Life, the worlds within World. Such unraveling of humanity, being the primary objective in order to contribute to our world making, requires a battery of tools not limited to the foraging data on the ground. The phenomenological movement in the social science has armed with the methodology of anthropology to delve deep into the lives of individual. We are now more confident that the description (which includes interpretation as well since all writings / representations by anthropologists are culturally mediated by language) is sure to be penetrating as anthropologists are ideally privileging all the voices. With

these ontological and epistemological groundings, anthropology bears many promises which will be fruitful only when we can be able to touch the lives of peoples from dawn to dusk, their joys and sorrows, their moods and sentiments to essentialise fulfillment of our vocation. The anthropology of daily lives is thus urgently required.

### MAN IN INDIA: A CENTURY OF LEGACY

*Man in India* has a rich legacy behind. It was founded by the ‘Father of Indian Ethnography’ Sarat Chandra Roy. The journal was published under the editorship of illustrious anthropologists namely Nirmal Kumar Bose, Verier Elwin, Christoph von fürer-Haimendorf, Surajit Chandra Sinha and Rebati Mohan Sarkar. It has reflected the nature and dimensions of anthropological studies in the country for a century. One has to run through the pages of the journal inescapably, if he or she wants to know how anthropology is defined in India. The journal never disowns its global connections like the discipline itself possesses. At present the scope is broader, opportunities have increased. For this, while holding ground on the soil of the country we should not shut off ourselves. There should be a true intercourse between local and global. The first volume of *Man in India*, edited by Rai Bahadur Sarat Chandra Roy, M.A., B.L., M.L.C. was published in 1921 as *A Quarterly Record of Anthropological Science With Special Reference to India*. The journal intended to publish four issues (Numbers) annually in March, June, September, and December. The first volume did not have any clearly mentioned formal editorial as such. However, W. Crooke’s article, the first one and invited as well, titled ‘A Suggested Programme for Anthropological Investigation in India’, in essence served the purpose of editorial for the journal. Crooke wrote (1921:2):

“Hence, it appears to me that the time has come for more minute and intensive studies of the smaller groups, and for investigation of special problems connected with religion and sociology, rather than for accounts of the people of a province or even of a single District.”

He laid much stress on the studies on ritual customs, and folklore of the people of the land. However his above quoted statement clearly indicates that he suggested move from simple compendium or encyclopaedic studies to a more focused issue of topic oriented anthropological study.

The reports of the anthropological studies which were published in the journal for a span of one hundred years, have however reflected a much broader engagement than that envisioned by Crooke. This broader perspective of possibilities of anthropological researches in India seemed to get articulated in the paper written by the editor himself in the same volume (Roy 1921: 11):

“As the object of the present journal is to assist anthropological study and research in India, and to serve as an useful medium for the collection of interesting anthropological information regarding Indian Man, ...”

Under the editorships of S.C. Roy (1921-1942), Ramesh Chandra Roy (1942-1952), Bhabesh Chandra Roy (1955-1958), N.K. Bose (1958-1972), Surajit Chandra Sinha (1973-1987), R.M. Sarkar (1988-2018) with editorial team consisted of illustrious scholars like W.G. Archer, Verrier Elwin, D.N. Majumdar, K.P. Chattopadhyay, Baidyanath Saraswati, H.K. Rakshit among others from time to time, the journal has left behind a glorious legacy and earned a wide reputation. This rich heritage, when handed down to the present generation holds a great promise and instills a sense of responsibility on the posterity. Now, it is our religious task at the abode of anthropology to come forward to shape and re-shape the body of knowledge with venturing into new domains of research, thus making anthropology more and more relevant. The man is indivisible in 'human' (with no genderism intended in spite of being its 'Man' in the journal *Man in India*) which represents the humanity that is 'a complex singularity which represents itself, paradoxically, in the finitely individual' (Rapport 2007a:268).

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