

ANANTAM IAS · OPTIONAL NOTES

Anthropology Optional Anthropology — Meaning, Scope, Development and Branches

Paper 1 · Unit 1

The discipline's own definition of itself: what anthropology studies, how it grew, the four fields it is built from, the neighbours it borrows from, and the method that makes an account anthropological rather than sociological, historical or biological.

anantamias.com

UPSC SYLLABUS

1.1 Meaning, scope and development of Anthropology. 1.2 Relationships with other disciplines: Social Sciences, Behavioural Sciences, Life Sciences, Medical Sciences, Earth Sciences and Humanities. 1.3 Main branches of Anthropology, their scope and relevance: (a) Social-Cultural Anthropology, (b) Biological Anthropology, (c) Archaeological Anthropology, (d) Linguistic Anthropology.

Meaning, Definition and Scope

Anthropology is the one discipline that insists on studying the human being whole: as a biological organism and as a culture-bearing social animal, from the earliest hominins to living communities, in every society rather than one. Everything distinctive about it follows from that ambition.

- Etymology: from the Greek anthropos (human being) and logos (study or science), literally the science of man. The word is old, but anthropology as a systematic, comparative, fieldwork-based discipline is a nineteenth and twentieth century creation, given its scientific frame by Darwin's Origin (1859) and by the discovery of deep human antiquity.
- Working definition: the holistic, comparative and empirical study of humankind in all places and all times, biological and cultural, from origins to the present. Two axes fix its scope: the temporal (from the emergence of the earliest hominins millions of years ago to the present) and the dimensional (the whole range of human societies, literate and non-literate, simple and complex). No society lies outside its remit.
- A.L. Kroeber described anthropology as the most scientific of the humanities and the most humanistic of the sciences, which captures its position astride the natural sciences and the humanities and explains its double method, measuring and interpreting.
- The foundational statement of its central concept is E.B. Tylor's definition of culture, from Primitive Culture (1871): "Culture, or civilization, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is 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."
- Read Tylor's words closely, because the definition does three kinds of work at once. Culture is a 'complex whole' (holism, an integrated totality rather than a list of traits). It is 'acquired', that is learned, and so is not transmitted biologically. And it is acquired 'as a member of society', so it is shared and social, not idiosyncratic. Those three properties, integrated, learned and shared, are still how anthropology defines culture.
- Tylor's definition marked the shift from casual description of the 'manners and customs' of distant peoples to a technical, cumulative science with culture as its organising object. Tylor held the first university post in anthropology, at Oxford, and is conventionally counted a founder of the academic discipline.
- Scope in practice: human evolution and biological variation, prehistory, kinship, marriage and family, economic, political and legal organisation, religion, magic and ritual, art and language, and, increasingly, modern problems such as development, migration, health, urbanisation and identity.
- The distinctive stamp of the discipline is a set of five habits: holism (the human studied as a whole), the comparative method (generalisations tested across cultures), time depth (an evolutionary and historical reach), fieldwork among the people studied, and cultural relativism as an operating attitude. An account that carries these is anthropological; one that does not is something else.

KEY TERMS

Anthropology — The holistic, comparative, empirical study of humankind in all times and places, biological and cultural.

Culture (Tylor, 1871) — The complex whole of knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and habits acquired by a person as a member of society: learned, shared and integrated.

Holism — The commitment to study the human being as a whole and any custom in the total context of its society, rather than in isolation.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTIONS

- "Anthropology is the systematic, objective and holistic study of humankind in all times and places." Discuss. [2022, 20 marks]
- Define Anthropology and describe its major branches. [2017, 20 marks]
- Discuss the relevance of Anthropology. [2018, 10 marks]

Development of Anthropological Thought

The discipline grew through a succession of theoretical orientations, each largely a reaction against the last. Knowing the sequence, and who owns which idea, is knowing the subject's spine, and attribution errors here are the ones examiners notice.

- Formative phase: before the mid-nineteenth century the raw material came from travellers, missionaries, traders and colonial administrators. There was ethnographic data but no discipline. The scientific frame arrived with Darwinian evolution and the recognition, in the 1850s and 1860s, that human beings were far older than biblical chronology allowed.
- Classical evolutionism (roughly 1860s to 1890s): E.B. Tylor, Lewis Henry Morgan (Ancient Society, 1877, with the savagery, barbarism and civilisation sequence and the pioneering study of kinship terminology), Sir James Frazer (The Golden Bough) and Herbert Spencer. Its assumptions were unilineal evolution (all societies pass through the same fixed stages in the same order), the comparative method, and the psychic unity of mankind (the human mind is everywhere alike, so similar inventions recur independently). Its method was 'armchair', synthesising others' reports. Attribution: 'survivals' and the animistic theory of religion are Tylor's; the three ethnical periods and the consanguine-to-monogamous family sequence are Morgan's.
- Diffusionism (early 1900s), a reaction denying independent invention and insisting that culture traits spread from centres: the British heliocentric school (Grafton Elliot Smith and W.J. Perry, who derived all civilisation from Egypt), the German-Austrian Kulturkreise or culture-circle school (Fritz Graebner, Father Wilhelm Schmidt), and the moderate American culture-area and age-area approach (Clark Wissler and Boas's circle).
- Historical Particularism (Franz Boas), the American reaction against both grand evolutionism and extreme diffusionism: each culture is the product of its own unique history, must be studied in its own terms, and universal schemes are premature guesswork. Boas insisted on intensive fieldwork, inductive data gathering, cultural relativism, and the separation of race, language and culture. He institutionalised the four-field approach and trained a generation, among them Kroeber, Lowie, Benedict, Mead and Sapir.
- British Functionalism (Bronislaw Malinowski): culture exists to satisfy human needs and every institution serves a function. Malinowski advanced a bio-cultural theory of needs (basic biological needs, derived

cultural needs) and, more lastingly, established intensive participant-observation fieldwork through his Trobriand Islands work (*Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, 1922).

- **Structural-Functionalism** (A.R. Radcliffe-Brown): the object of study is social structure, the enduring network of social relations, and institutions function to maintain solidarity and structural continuity, on an organic analogy taken from Durkheim rather than from biological need. The Malinowski versus Radcliffe-Brown contrast, individual needs against social structure, is a standard comparison.
- **Culture and Personality school** (American, 1930s and 1940s): Ruth Benedict (*Patterns of Culture*, cultures as configurations of a dominant ethos), Margaret Mead (*Coming of Age in Samoa*), and Kardiner and Linton (basic personality structure). It studied the mutual shaping of culture and the individual psyche.
- **Later orientations**, named for completeness and for comparison questions: neo-evolutionism (Leslie White's culture as the capture of energy, Julian Steward's cultural ecology and multilineal evolution), French structuralism (Claude Levi-Strauss, the deep structure of the human mind read off myth and kinship), symbolic and interpretive anthropology (Victor Turner; Clifford Geertz's 'thick description' and culture as a text to be read), and cultural materialism (Marvin Harris).

KEY TERMS

Unilineal evolution — The evolutionist claim that all societies advance through the same fixed sequence of stages, from savagery to civilisation.

Psychic unity of mankind — The assumption that the human mind is fundamentally similar everywhere, so similar cultural forms can arise independently.

Historical particularism — Boas's principle that each culture is the outcome of its own particular history and must be studied in its own terms, without universal schemes.

Anthropology in India

The Indian trajectory has its own periodisation and its own founders, and Indian material is expected in any Paper 1 answer on the discipline's growth. It matters that Indian anthropology grew up studying a complex, literate, civilisationally deep society, not a 'primitive' one.

- **Formative or colonial phase** (roughly 1774 to 1919): knowledge gathered largely as an aid to administration. The Asiatic Society of Bengal (Sir William Jones, 1784), and later the censuses and district gazetteers, accumulated data; H.H. Risley applied anthropometry to caste and race in *The People of India*, including a nasal-index theory of caste that is now discredited. The material was rich, the purpose colonial.
- **Formative academic phase** (from 1920): the first Department of Anthropology in India was established at the University of Calcutta in 1920. Rai Bahadur Sarat Chandra Roy, often called the father of Indian ethnography, produced monographs on the Oraon, Munda and Kharia and founded the journal *Man in India* in 1921.
- **Constructive and analytical phases** (after 1950): rapid expansion of university departments, the work of the Anthropological Survey of India (established 1945), and theoretically ambitious Indian scholarship, including D.N. Majumdar, N.K. Bose (the Hindu method of tribal absorption), Irawati Karve (kinship organisation in India), L.P. Vidyarthi (the concept of the sacred complex, from his study of Hindu Kashi) and S.C. Dube (village studies).
- The distinctive Indian contribution is the study of one's own complex, literate and historically deep civilisation, which pushed anthropology well beyond its original 'primitive society' brief and tied it far more

closely to sociology than in the West. Tribe, caste and village became the classic Indian objects of study, and the discipline fed directly into tribal development and welfare policy.

KEY TERMS

Anthropological Survey of India — The national institution for anthropological research, established in 1945, best known later for the People of India project.

Sacred complex — L.P. Vidyarthi's concept, from Hindu Kashi, linking sacred geography, sacred performances and sacred specialists in a pilgrimage centre.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTIONS

- Discuss the role of Anthropology in contemporary India. [2014, 15 marks]

The Four-Field Structure and Biological (Physical) Anthropology

Following Boas, American anthropology organised itself into four coordinate fields so that no aspect of the human, bodily or cultural, ancient or living, could fall outside it. This four-field charter, held together by holism, is the discipline's signature; each field is a partial view of one object, the human being.

- The four fields are biological (physical) anthropology, social-cultural anthropology, archaeological (prehistoric) anthropology and linguistic anthropology. Between them they treat the human as an organism, as a culture-bearer, as a historical product and as a speaker. The unifying idea, and the reason to keep them together, is holism.
- Biological or Physical Anthropology studies the human as a biological species: its evolution, its place among the primates, and the range of biological variation within the living species. It is where anthropology meets the life sciences.
- Its scope includes human palaeontology and evolution (the fossil record from the earliest hominins to Homo sapiens), primatology (the comparative study of living primates for evolutionary insight), human genetics and molecular anthropology, the study of human biological variation (blood groups, morphology, and the anthropological critique of the race concept), human growth and development (auxology), human ecology and adaptation to climate and altitude, and anthropometry and dermatoglyphics.
- Its methods run from fossil description and comparative anatomy through serology and population genetics to DNA analysis and statistical anthropometry.
- Applied relevance is wide: forensic anthropology (skeletal identification, facial reconstruction and DNA fingerprinting for medico-legal work and disaster-victim identification), medical and nutritional anthropology, human engineering and ergonomics (anthropometric data for designing tools, seating, protective equipment and clothing), sports anthropology, and genetic counselling.
- The bio-cultural approach, treating human biology and culture as continuously interacting rather than as separate domains, is regarded as the hallmark of modern biological anthropology and is what distinguishes it from human biology proper.
- The four branches are compared in the table below on their central concern, data and methods, subfields and applications; the detailed treatment of each follows in the next sections.

The four branches of anthropology compared

Branch	Central concern	Principal data and methods	Key subfields	Applied relevance
Biological (Physical)	Humans as an evolving, varying biological species	Fossils, comparative anatomy, genetics, anthropometry, serology	Palaeoanthropology, primatology, human genetics, human variation, forensic anthropology	Forensics, medicine and nutrition, ergonomics, genetic counselling
Social-Cultural	Living societies and their cultures	Fieldwork, participant observation, the comparative method	Economic, political, kinship, religion, medical and development anthropology	Development planning, tribal and welfare policy, applied and action anthropology
Archaeological (Prehistoric)	Past cultures reconstructed from material remains	Excavation, artefact typology, stratigraphy, relative and absolute dating	Prehistoric, protohistoric and historical archaeology, ethnoarchaeology	Heritage management, culture history, museology
Linguistic	Language in relation to culture and society	Recording, phonemic and grammatical analysis, comparison of languages	Descriptive, historical, socio- and ethno-linguistics	Documentation of endangered and tribal languages, mother-tongue education, script development

KEY TERMS

Four-field approach — The Boasian organisation of anthropology into biological, social-cultural, archaeological and linguistic branches, unified by holism.

Biological anthropology — The study of humans as a biological, evolving and varying species, including palaeoanthropology, primatology, genetics and human variation.

Bio-cultural approach — The treatment of human biology and culture as continuously interacting, held to be the hallmark of modern biological anthropology.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTIONS

- How can synergising the core branches of anthropology reinvigorate its holistic spirit? [2020, 20 marks]
- "The bio-cultural approach is the hallmark of Biological Anthropology." Explain. [2021, 10 marks]

Social-Cultural Anthropology

The largest of the four fields: the comparative study of living human societies and their cultures, of how people organise social life and give it meaning. It is what most non-specialists picture when they hear the word anthropology.

- Object: living societies and their cultures. The British tradition calls it social anthropology, with the stress on social structure and relations (after Radcliffe-Brown); the American tradition calls it cultural anthropology, with the stress on culture as learned, shared meaning (after Boas). The two labels mark a genuine difference of emphasis, not of subject matter.
- Ethnography and ethnology are its two moments. Ethnography is the first-hand descriptive study of a single society, the fieldwork monograph. Ethnology is the comparative and theoretical analysis that generalises across many ethnographies. Fieldwork and participant observation are its defining method.

- Its subject matter covers kinship, marriage and family; economic organisation (production, exchange and consumption); political organisation (order, authority, law and conflict); religion, magic and ritual; and expressive culture (art, myth and folklore).
- It has thrown off specialised subfields: economic anthropology (including the formalist-substantivist debate and Karl Polanyi's argument that the economy is embedded in society), political anthropology, the anthropology of religion, legal anthropology, medical anthropology, urban anthropology and development anthropology.
- Scope and relevance: it supplies the comparative, ground-level understanding of communities that development and welfare policy needs. Applied and action anthropology use it to design and evaluate interventions among tribal and marginal populations, where an outsider's blueprint routinely fails without knowledge of local social organisation.
- In India this field carries the study of tribe, caste and village, and feeds directly into tribal development, rehabilitation, resettlement and the safeguarding of particularly vulnerable groups.

KEY TERMS

Ethnography — The first-hand descriptive study of a single society, produced through fieldwork.

Ethnology — The comparative, theoretical analysis that generalises across many ethnographies.

Participant observation — The method of living within a community and taking part in its life while systematically observing it.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTIONS

- Discuss the scope and relevance of Social-Cultural Anthropology. [2023, 10 marks]

Archaeological (Prehistoric) Anthropology

This is anthropology's time depth. Where the historian relies on documents, the prehistoric archaeologist relies on the excavated object and its context, and so recovers the vast stretch of the human career that lies before writing.

- Object: it reconstructs the cultures of the past, especially the deep pre-literate past, from their surviving material remains: stone tools, pottery, structures, hearths, burials, food refuse and art. These peoples left no written records, so the object carries the evidence.
- Core concerns: the Stone Age framework (Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic) and the later metal ages, tool typology and technology, the origins of agriculture and animal domestication, and the rise of settlement and civilisation.
- Methods: systematic excavation; stratigraphy, the reading of successive deposited layers on the law of superposition; typological seriation of artefacts; and dating techniques, both relative (stratigraphy, fluorine dating, palynology) and absolute (radiocarbon or Carbon-14, potassium-argon, dendrochronology, thermoluminescence).
- It leans heavily on the earth sciences (geology for stratigraphy and the Pleistocene and Quaternary sequence) and on the biological sciences (faunal and floral remains, palaeobotany), which is why it sits at the junction of anthropology with those fields.
- Ethnoarchaeology, the study of living communities in order to interpret archaeological traces, links prehistoric archaeology back to social-cultural anthropology and keeps the reconstruction of dead cultures anchored to observed human behaviour.

- Relevance: heritage identification and conservation, museology, national culture history, and the correction of origin myths by physical evidence.

KEY TERMS

Stratigraphy — The study of the sequence of deposited layers on the law of superposition, used to establish relative chronology in excavation.

Ethnoarchaeology — The study of living peoples to interpret the material traces recovered by archaeology.

Prehistory — The span of the human past before written records, known only through material remains.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTIONS

- Discuss the field methods in Archaeological Anthropology. [2018, 15 marks]

Linguistic Anthropology

The study of language in its relation to culture and society: not language as an abstract system for its own sake, which is linguistics proper, but language as human behaviour and as the principal carrier of culture.

- Its branches: descriptive (structural) linguistics, which records and analyses the sound system (phonemics) and grammar of a language, and is indispensable for unwritten languages; historical or comparative linguistics, which reconstructs language families, relationships and change over time; sociolinguistics, which studies variation by class, region, gender and situation; and ethnolinguistics, which studies the mutual influence of language and worldview.
- Its founding anthropological interest is that most languages of tribal and non-literate peoples were unwritten, so recording and analysing them was itself an anthropological task. Boas, Edward Sapir and Leonard Bloomfield built American descriptive linguistics on exactly this work.
- The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (linguistic relativity) is its most cited idea: the language one speaks shapes, and in its strong version determines, how one perceives and categorises reality. State it as a hypothesis, since the strong determinist form is not accepted, while a weaker influence of language on habitual thought is widely granted.
- Relevance: the documentation and revitalisation of endangered and tribal languages, the development of scripts and primers, mother-tongue and multilingual education (of direct policy interest in tribal India), and translation across cultural boundaries.

KEY TERMS

Sapir-Whorf hypothesis — The claim that the structure of a language shapes or determines the habitual thought and perception of its speakers (linguistic relativity).

Ethnolinguistics — The study of the mutual relationship between language and culture, including how language encodes a worldview.

Phonemics — The analysis of the meaningful sound units of a language, central to describing unwritten languages.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTIONS

- Discuss the relationship between Linguistics and Social-Cultural Anthropology. [2019, 10 marks]
- Discuss the major branches of Linguistic Anthropology and the use of language in social settings. [2021, 15 marks]

Relationship with Other Disciplines

Because it studies the whole human being, anthropology overlaps every discipline that touches humanity, borrowing from each and lending to each, while keeping its own holistic and comparative stamp. The syllabus names six neighbours, and answers are marked on showing both the overlap and the difference.

- Life sciences (biology, zoology, anatomy, physiology, genetics): the closest tie, through biological anthropology. Evolutionary biology, primatology, human anatomy and physiology, and molecular genetics are shared ground; anthropology contributes the specifically human, comparative and population-level dimension that a purely biological account leaves out.
- Earth sciences (geology, palaeontology, geography): prehistoric archaeology and human palaeontology rest on stratigraphy, the Pleistocene and Quaternary sequence, and geochronology to date fossils and tools; geography meets anthropology in human and cultural ecology and in the study of habitat and settlement.
- Medical sciences: medical anthropology studies health, illness and healing as cultural as well as biological facts; anthropology contributes to epidemiology (the social patterning of disease), nutrition, human genetics and inherited disorders, ethnomedicine and traditional healing, and forensic identification.
- Behavioural sciences (psychology): psychological anthropology and the culture-and-personality school examine how culture shapes cognition, emotion and personality, while cross-cultural psychology tests supposedly universal findings against non-Western populations.
- Other social sciences: with economics through economic anthropology and the substantivist critique of the assumption of universal economic rationality; with political science through political anthropology and the study of stateless and traditional systems of order; with history through ethnohistory and the archaeological recovery of the past.
- The anthropology-sociology relationship is a stock exam theme. Classically the two were distinguished by object (anthropology studied small-scale, non-literate, 'simple' or tribal societies, sociology the large, complex, literate, industrial one), by method (intensive fieldwork and participant observation against survey and statistics) and by scale (the holistic study of a whole community against the study of segments of society). The distinction has largely dissolved, since anthropologists now study cities, factories and their own societies; what remains is a difference of emphasis and tradition, not of essence.
- Humanities: history, philosophy, literature and the arts. Interpretive anthropology, above all Clifford Geertz, explicitly aligns the discipline with the humanities, reading a culture as one reads a text, in search of meaning rather than law. Kroeber's placing of anthropology between the sciences and the humanities is exactly about this dual pull.

KEY TERMS

Medical anthropology — The study of health, illness and healing as simultaneously biological and cultural phenomena.

Ethnohistory — The study of the past of non-literate or colonised peoples by combining documentary, oral and archaeological evidence.

Psychological anthropology — The study of how culture shapes cognition, emotion and personality, continuous with the culture-and-personality school.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTIONS

- "Anthropology provides a multidimensional understanding of human beings by bridging the gap between science and humanities." Discuss. [2025, 20 marks]

The Anthropological Method — Holism, Comparison, Fieldwork, Emic and Etic, Relativism

What makes an account anthropological is less its subject than its method and attitude. Five features recur, and together they are what an examiner means by the 'anthropological perspective'.

- **Holism:** the commitment to study the human being as a whole, biological and cultural, past and present, and to set any single custom within the total context of a society rather than examine it in isolation. Holism is the reason for the four-field structure and the standing objection to studying one institution in a vacuum.
- **The comparative method:** anthropology tests every generalisation across the full range of human societies, not one. Its form has changed over time, from the evolutionists' loose, unilineal comparison of traits torn from their context, to the controlled comparison of related societies (Fred Eggan), to large-scale cross-cultural statistical testing using standard samples (George Murdock's Human Relations Area Files).
- **Fieldwork and participant observation:** the central and distinctive technique, in which the anthropologist lives for a long period within the community, learns its language, and takes part in its life while observing it. W.H.R. Rivers's genealogical method and the Torres Strait expedition of 1898 (led by A.C. Haddon) began the move to the field; Malinowski's Trobriand work (Argonauts of the Western Pacific, 1922) made intensive participant observation, and the goal of grasping 'the native's point of view', the professional standard.
- **Emic and etic:** Kenneth Pike's distinction (1954), modelled on phonemic and phonetic. An emic account describes a culture in the insiders' own categories and meanings; an etic account uses the observer's external, comparative and scientific categories. Good ethnography needs both, and Marvin Harris made the pair central to cultural materialism.
- **Cultural relativism versus ethnocentrism:** ethnocentrism is judging another culture by the standards of one's own and treating one's own as the natural measure; cultural relativism, which Boas established as method, is the principle that each culture must be understood in its own terms and its practices seen in their own context before being judged. Distinguish methodological relativism, a necessary research attitude, from moral relativism, the contested philosophical claim that no cross-cultural moral judgement is ever valid; adopting the method does not commit one to the philosophy.
- Taken together, holism, comparison, fieldwork, the emic-etic balance and relativism form the discipline's method and much of its ethic. They are the reason two scholars can study the same custom and only one of them produce anthropology.

KEY TERMS

Comparative method — The testing of generalisations about human society across many cultures rather than one, from unilineal comparison to controlled and statistical cross-cultural comparison.

Emic and etic — Pike's contrast between description in the insiders' own categories (emic) and in the observer's external analytical categories (etic).

Cultural relativism — Boas's principle that each culture must be understood on its own terms and in its own context before it is judged, as against ethnocentrism.

Last-mile revision

- Anthropology is the holistic, comparative, fieldwork-based study of humankind in all times and places, biological and cultural. Kroeber: the most scientific of the humanities and the most humanistic of the sciences.
- Tylor (1871): culture is the 'complex whole' of knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and habits acquired by a person as a member of society. The load-bearing words are 'complex whole' and 'acquired ... as a member of society'. Culture is integrated, learned and shared, not inherited.
- Development runs classical evolutionism (Tylor, Morgan, Frazer; unilineal, psychic unity, armchair) to diffusionism to Boas's historical particularism to functionalism (Malinowski, needs and fieldwork) and structural-functionalism (Radcliffe-Brown, social structure).
- The four fields are the Boasian charter: biological, social-cultural, archaeological and linguistic. Holism is what unites them, and attributing the four-field approach to Boas, not Tylor or Malinowski, is the safe answer.
- Biological studies human evolution, primates, genetics and variation; social-cultural studies living societies by fieldwork; archaeological reconstructs the past from material remains; linguistic studies language in relation to culture.
- Ethnography is the description of one society; ethnology is the comparison across many. Do not use the words interchangeably.
- Fieldwork and participant observation are the signature method. Malinowski (Trobriands, 1922) set the standard of grasping the native's point of view; Rivers and the 1898 Torres Strait expedition began the shift to the field.
- Emic is the insider's categories, etic the observer's, from Pike (1954).
- Cultural relativism (understand a culture in its own terms, Boas) opposes ethnocentrism (judging others by one's own standards). Separate methodological relativism from moral relativism.
- The anthropology-sociology distinction (simple versus complex society, fieldwork versus survey) has largely dissolved and should be presented as historical, not fixed.
- Indian growth: Asiatic Society (1784), first department at Calcutta (1920), S.C. Roy as the father of Indian ethnography, Anthropological Survey of India (1945). Indian anthropology grew up studying a complex civilisation, hence its closeness to sociology.

Common errors to avoid

- Treating anthropology as only the study of tribes or only the study of bones. It studies all humans, all times, biologically and culturally; the tribal focus is a historical accident, not the definition.
- Misquoting Tylor's definition of culture or attributing it to someone else. It is Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, 1871.
- Attributing the four-field approach to Malinowski or Tylor. It is Boas who institutionalised it.
- Confusing the branches, especially treating archaeology as outside anthropology. In the four-field tradition, prehistoric archaeology is a branch of anthropology.
- Blurring ethnography (description of one society) with ethnology (comparison across societies).
- Presenting cultural relativism as moral relativism. As method it means understanding before judging, not that no judgement is ever possible.
- Calling participant observation mere observation. It requires prolonged residence and taking part, usually in the local language.
- Presenting the anthropology-sociology distinction as permanent. The 'simple versus complex' contrast has largely broken down.
- Saying culture is inherited. Tylor's whole point is that it is acquired, that is learned, as a member of society.
- Reducing the psychic unity of mankind to a claim of racial equality. It is a methodological premise of the evolutionists that similar cultural forms can be independently invented because minds are alike.