**THEORIES IN ANTHROPOLOGY**

Theory is a statement or statements of how and why specific facts are related (Macionis, 1975:15). Facts become meaningful if they are organized within a frame, facts have no importance in scientific knowledge out side such a frame. This framework is provided by a theory (Myrdal, 1957:164). It should be noted that the terms “perspectives” and “school of thought” are often used interchangeable with the term “theory”. Theories are considered very important in Anthropology to explain the phenomenon of culture. Anthropology has proposed different important theories on man and culture. Below is a list of Anthropological theories. These theories contributed a lot in the development of Anthropology as a discipline.

1. Evolutionism
2. Diffusionism
3. Functionalism
4. Structural Functionalism
5. Historical Particularism
6. Cultural Materialism
7. Neo-Evolutionism
8. Structuralism
9. Culture and Personality

Below is a discussion of the emergence and development of major anthropological theories in terms of their basic premises, explanations and criticisms.

1. **EVOLUTIONISM**

The term evolution means a gradual development in something. The concept of evolution is applied in various disciplines. In anthropology, cultural evolution is the idea that human cukture changes over time. Changes occur in socially transmitted beliefs, knowledge, customs, skills, attitudes, language, and material culture and so on. Cultural evolution is the development of cultures from simple to complex form. The evolutionary theory was highly influenced by the concept of evolution put forward by Charles Darwin in *The origin of species (1859).* Social scientists like anthropologists and sociologists found that biological evolution provides a framework for understanding the origin and development of culture and society. Indeed, the idea of society as an evolving organism was a biological analogy taken up by many anthropologists.

This theory may also be termed as the theory of cultural or socio-cultural evolution (Zanden, 1990). Evolutionism dominated anthropological thinking mainly during the latter years of 19th century. Evolutionism has two prominent proponents, who developed what is known as unilineal evolution. These were Edward Burnet Tylor and Lewis Henry Morgan. Unilineal evolution is the view that societies evolve in a single direction from simple stage toward complexity progress and civilization. It was interested in explaining that why societies are at similar or different stages of development. The basic idea behind evolutionism is that the history of humanity and its socio-cultural systems have developed following a unilineal path from simple to complex. This approach was applied to understand the development of culture overtime. This theory postulates that those societies that were able to develop new social and cultural aspects for their survival still exists and those that did not develop any adaptation become extinct. Herbert Spencer coined the term “survival of the fittest” for it. According to E.B. Tylor, society’s evolution is unidirectional and passes through various stages. Tylor assumed that hunter-gatherers and other non-western societies were living at a lower level of existence that the civilized societies in Europe went through long ago.

Tylor also proposed an evolutionary theory of the origin of religion. He defined religion as the belief in spiritual beings. Tylor has shown the different stages of evolution of religion. From a state of non-religious conditions to belief in the supreme deity. Human when originated did not had any religion then they witnessed death and saw dreams. They assumed that beside the physical existence of human beings there also exist some other beings which cannot be seen by human eyes. They started to belief in souls. This stage is named as animism by Tylor. The second stage of religion is named as animatism. According to Tylor, in this stage humans started to believe in ghosts-souls and believed that all the material things also have a soul. After they started to believe in spirits and special deities and worshipped them. Here came the idea of polytheism. The last stage in evolution of religion, according to Tylor, is the belief in the single supreme deity which he called as monotheism.

**Animism Animatism Polytheism Monotheism**

The other prominent figure of evolutionism is Lewis Henry Morgan. His most prominent book is “Ancient Society”. Morgan was interested in evolution of specific things like subsistence, government, language, family, religion, house life, architecture and property. In Morgan’s work two categories of investigation are given. One is about the inventions and discoveries and another is about the evolution of primary social institutions. He proposed that at first there were kinship-based societies and then there came politically based societies. He said that societies have evolved through three stages named as savagery, barbarism and civilization. These stages had been further divided into various sub-stages. Each stage is characterized with invention and discoveries of various material aspects of culture.

**Morgan’s Model of Cultural Evolution**

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| **Level of understanding** | **Characteristics** |
| **Savagery** | Lower Savagery  | From the infancy of human race, fruit and nut subsistence  |
| Middle Savagery  | Started with the use of fish and discovery of fire  |
| Upper Savagery  | From the invention of bow & arrows  |
| **Barbarism** | Lower Barbarism  | From the invention of pottery  |
| Middle Barbarism  | From the domestication of animals & plants  |
| Upper Barbarism  | From the discovery of iron and use of iron tools  |
| **Civilization** | Invention of phonetic alphabets with the use of writing |

Morgan also put forward the evolutionary theory of family. According to him, the family has passed through the following five stages.

1. **Consanguine Family**

In this stage of family, marriage between blood relatives was not forbidden. Sibling marriages were permitted.

1. **Punalvant Family**

The next stage was of restrictions on incestuous marriage and the family group arrived at this stage in which a group of brothers married a group of sisters. Groups were allowed to have relations among themselves. There was no concept of partners.

1. **Syndasmian Family**

In this stage, one man married one woman but the sex relationship of the women was not restricted. These used to be extra marital relations.

1. **Patriarchal Family**

In this stage, man became dominant in society and family and women sexuality was controlled by man. Power was assigned to men and could marry a number of wives.

1. **Monogamous Family**

This is the present stage of family. In this stage, one man can marry only one woman at one time and one woman can marry only one man at a time.

**Criticism**

The theory of evolution was criticized by different thinkers in the field of anthropology. The critiques said that evolutionists did not go for extensive systematic fieldwork rather their work was based on secondary data which was given by historians and travelers. They were named as ‘arm chair’ anthropologists. It was criticized that their evidence came from biased Europeans who considered primitive societies less developed, less intelligent and less sophisticated in comparison to Europe. This theory was criticized because of this ethnocentric view.