

2 Research Methodology

2.1 Philosophy of Social Research

Sharma, K.N.: Problematique of Unification of Social Sciences. *The Eastern Anthropologist* 60, 3 & 4 (2007): 273-89.

The unification of the social sciences, that is, the branches of knowledge and scholarship dedicated to the scientific method and focusing on society, seems logical and beneficial, but the objective has in-built obstacles. In order to understand this, the author briefly details the history of the natural and social sciences. The social sciences, among them sociology and anthropology, originated in 17th century France. The new sciences were based on belief in the biological unity of mankind and the continuity of human nature. Psychology focused attention on the mental process of man while anthropology, which focused on man's physical form, was subsequently combined with archaeology and ethnography (the latter comprising descriptive accounts of tribal societies). Distinctive trends were observed in Germany and Britain such that by the 20th century anthropology claimed to study 'mankind'. Sociology, on the other hand, claimed to study 'society', with distinguished contributions from Marx, Weber, Durkheim, Spencer, Sumner and Comte.

The claims of a Eurocentric sociological theory to universal validity, objectivity and scientific methodology were questioned in the late twentieth century by various trends. Psychology also added to the natural sciences' premise that man was a product of nature the notion of man as a social being. This led to major landmarks such as the theory of instincts, behaviourism and learning theory, the Gestalt Theory and Psychoanalytic Theory.

The author then traces the development of anthropology and sociology in India, concluding that in spite of the establishment of some thirty research institutes and a central institution for funding the social sciences, no significant action has been taken to unify the social sciences. He then goes on to suggest possibilities of unification through the notions of a unitary social science, as well as through Samkhya philosophy.