

## Anthropology in Prehistoric Archaeology: The Indian Scene

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**ABSTRACT** Acculturative and historical factors apart, many cultural and civilization traits the world over have originated, evolved and taken definite shapes for adaptation of humans to specific environment components and niches. In contemporary social cultural situations this construct is more meaningfully evident in case of inhabitants of isolated, difficult and imposing natural conditions where human adaption, at the level of culture, with environmental sounds remarkable. Ladakh, a district of Jammu and Kashmir state of India, represents a valid instance of this kind. The Ladakhi Society and its network of cultural patterns speak of high degree of adaptation to specific environmental paradigm. Both culture and environment are taken in their broad meanings. As interpretive dimension, the theoretical baggage in respect of cultural ecology is critically reviewed in the light of substantivism originating from microsetting of Ladakhis. Prehistoric Archaeology in India has made tremendous success in terms of discovering a large number of very important sites. The excavations of these sites and the analysis of the antiquities retrieved are also meticulously executed. Yet we have still not been able to identify the exact cultural status of any region of a time or the manner of dispersal of one chosen economy through time and space. The paper argues that this colossal neglect is primarily because archaeology in India still follows the Geozoological methodology evolved during 1840-1870. The universal approach of a threefold division of the past cultures adopted in Britain by Lubbock, Evan and Boyd and modified by Gabriel de Mortillet in France arrived in India and shaped the official charter of the survey of India. This Lubbockian approach was acceptable to the then existing environment of Baconian Science in Great Britain but in course of time culturologists could bring out inner contradictions arising in this approach. However, in India no deviation from this Lubbockian straight-jacket could be tolerated. Unfortunately the nature of the archaeological evidences from India also does not help this kind of an over simplistic approach to arrange the prehistoric cultures. In the early thirties right through sixties and seventies we have been faithfully replicating the terms Paleolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic and Chalcolithic to describe our finds. The present work argues that this approach will not be able to help us in understanding adaptation, population dispersal, culture change or even causes of change operative during our prehistoric past. Consequently Anthropologists should start getting involved in atleast the interpretation of these archaeologically described 'cultures'. In this regard the status of Hunter-Gatherer studies also need to be specially geared to understand resource retrieval potentiality, energy efficiency and above all the pattern of social investments used by Hunter-Gatherers to take care of stress periods. There are numerous awkward problems in prehistory of India to which the archeologists have stopped paying any attention. Anthropologists need to sharpen their tools of analysis and take up these issues for future studies.