

FUNCTIONALISM



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2 AIMS AND ORDER –

- To know the concepts of functionalism
- To know the theorists associated with functionalism
- To understand the Malinowski's contribution of functionalism
- To know about the causes of decline of functionalist theory

HISTORICAL

3 BACKGROUND

- The roots of functionalism are found in the works of sociologists, Herbert Spencer and Émile Durkheim. Functionalism considers the culture, as interrelated whole entity, not a collection of isolated traits. Functionalism looks for the function or part (role) that is played by several aspects of culture, in order to maintain a social system. It is a framework that considers society as a system and these parts work together to promote solidarity and stability in the social system.

4 INTRODUCTION

- Functionalism, as a school of thought in anthropology, emerged in the early twentieth century. **Bronislaw K. Malinowski** and **A. R. Radcliffe-Brown** had the greatest influence on the development of functionalism.
- Functionalism was a reaction to deficiencies of the evolutionary and diffusionist theories of the nineteenth century.
- Two versions of functionalism developed between 1910 and 1930:
 - i) Malinowski's **bio-cultural (or psychological) functionalism**
 - ii) Radcliffe-Brown's **structural-functionalism**

B. K. MALINOWSKI (1884-1942)

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Malinowski was one of the founding fathers of British social anthropology and father of Ethnography. He was from Poland and did fieldwork in Trobriand Island. He did honours in subjects like mathematics, physics and philosophy and in 1910 he enrolled in the London School of Economics to study anthropology.



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Salient features of Functionalism

- **Culture is a means for satisfaction of human needs.**
- **Each and every aspects of culture has a function.**
- **They are interrelated and interdependent on each other.**
- **Institutions satisfy needs of human and society as a whole.**
- **Culture is partial activity to total activity of which it is a part.**

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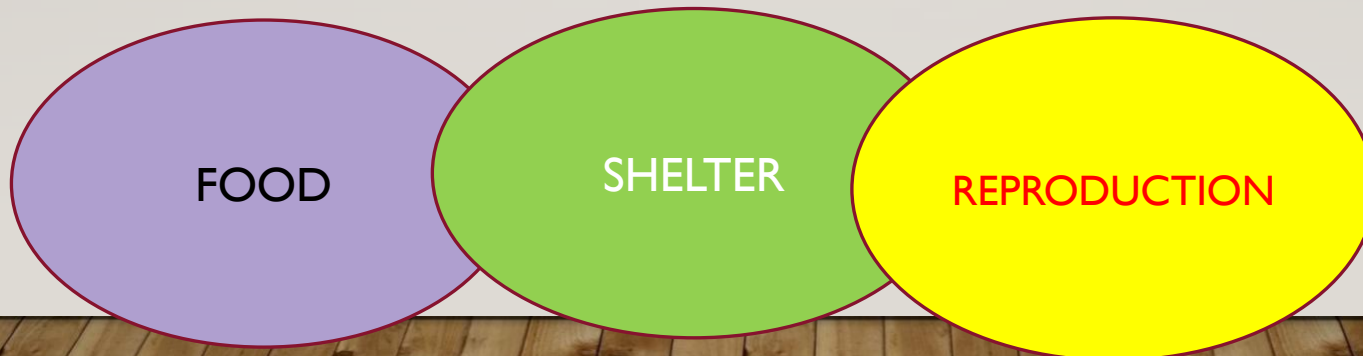
MALINOWSKI'S CONTRIBUTIONS

1. The Family among the Australian Aborigines: A sociological study. 1913
2. Kula : The Circulating Exchange of valuables in the Archipelagos of Eastern New Guinea. 1920
3. Argonauts of the Western Pacific. 1922
4. Crime and custom in savage society. 1926.
5. A Scientific theory of Culture. 1944
6. Dynamics of Culture Change.1955
7. Sex Culture and Myth. 1962

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Malinowski's theory focuses on how culture meets the need of individuals.

Malinowski suggested that individuals have physiological needs (reproduction, food, shelter) and these needs are fulfilled by the social institutions. He talked about four basic "instrumental needs" (economics, social control, education, and political organization), that require institutional devices to get fulfilled.



9 **METHODOLOGIES OF THIS FUNCTIONAL APPROACH**



❖ **Long term, Intensive field work**

❖ **In dept knowledge of a particular society by
Ethnographical studies**

❖ **Participant observation**

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HIS DETAILED DESCRIPTIONS OF TROBRIAND SOCIAL LIFE AND THOUGHTS ARE AMONG THE WELL KNOWN ETHNOGRAPHIES OF WORLD AND HIS ARGONAUTS OF THE WESTERN PACIFIC (1922) IS ONE OF THE MOST WIDELY READ WORKS OF ANTHROPOLOGY. HE WAS ONE OF THE LEADING FUNCTIONALISTS OF 20TH CENTURY.



Source: anthronow.com

Malinowski definition of Culture

“Culture is an instrumental reality for the fulfillment of basic needs of man”.

Malinowski defined the four stages of theory of Need-

1. **Permanent series of vital sequences**
2. **Basic needs**
3. **Derived needs**
4. **Integrative needs/ Imperative needs.**

Need- System of condition in organism relating to its environment necessary for the survival of the individual and the group.

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Primary need:- Food (hunger, thirst), Reproduction, Shelter, Protection .

Derived need:- Family, Marriage, Kinship, Political organisation, Economic organisation.

Integrative need:- Religion, Science, Art and Knowledge.

BASIC NEED

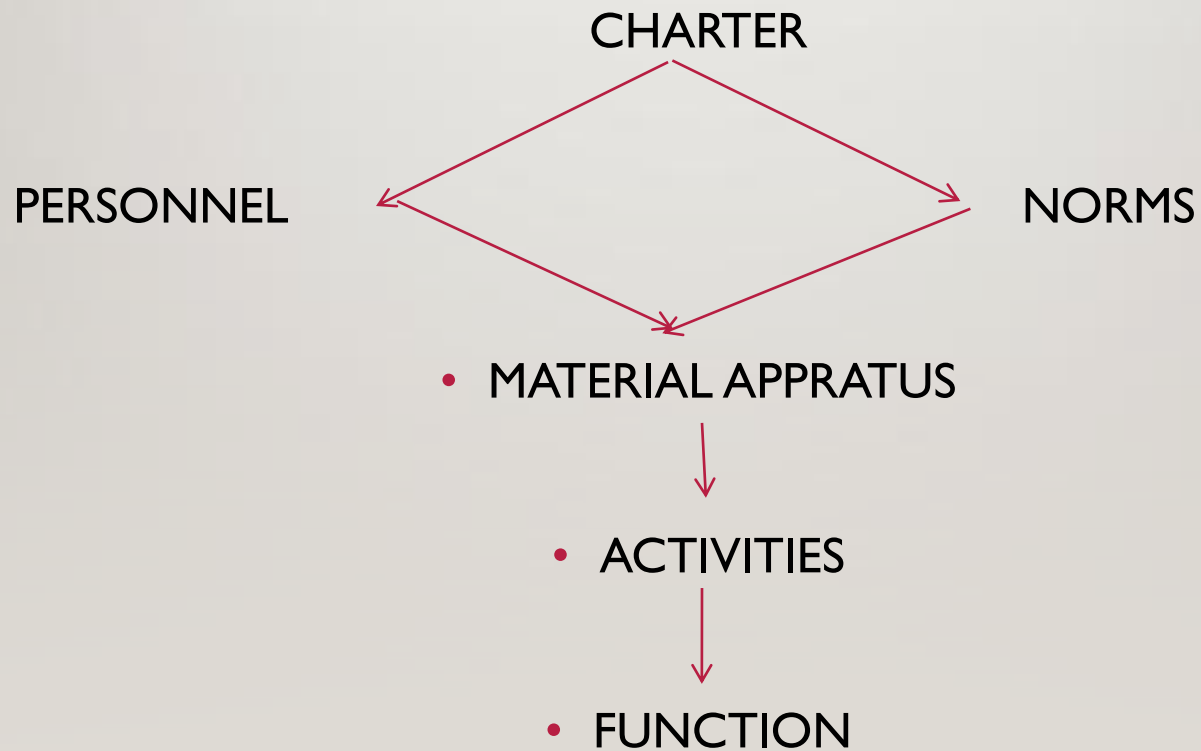
BASIC NEEDS	CULTURAL RESPONSE
Metabolism	Commissariat
Reproduction	Family, Marriage, Kinship
Body comforts	Shelter
Safety	Protection
Movement	Activities
Growth	Training
Health	Hygiene

Source: Upadhyaya and pandey, 2006

14 MALINOWSKI'S FUNCTIONALISM

Malinowski said that culture is a need of survival system of human being. Culture is a system that satisfies human needs. For that he identified seven biological needs of individuals. With this approach functionalism is known as Bio-cultural Functionalism. He also focused on the Psychological Functionalism.

there are also culturally derived needs and four basic “instrumental needs” (economics, social control, education, and political organization) which requires instrumental devices. Each institute has personnel, a charter, a set of rules, activities, material apparatus or technology and a function. (voget, 1996)



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Malinowski said, 'culture is a need surveying system'. Culture is a system which satisfies needs such as food, reproduction, security, health, protection etc. As Malinowski gave importance to individual needs so his functionalism is also known as Psychological Functionalism'.

17 CRITICISM

1. Functionalism considers the functions of parts of a whole system to fulfil the needs but it do not look into the matter why and how do these needs emerge?
2. Functionalism was greatly criticised for **neglecting the historical perspective**. Its anti historical approach made it almost impossible to understand the social processes.
3. **Ecological factors** were also ignored in functional approach.
4. Functionalism ignored inequalities like race, gender, class which are the main causative agent of conflict and tension, these are **dysfunctions of culture**, but he didn't talked about them.

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Thank you