

QNo 3:

Applied anthropology. How it can be utilized to solve problems like social inequality, ethnic violence, political instability and terrorism?

• Introduction:

Applied anthropology refers to practical use of anthropological theory and research methods to solve real world problems.

Applied anthropology started in Europe during 19th century and 20th century when the British, French, Belgian, Dutch and Russian governments gathered ethnographic information. Today, applied anthropology is used in various fields, including public health, government, education, business etc. Applied anthropology is instrumental in addressing complex social issues such as social inequality, ethnic violence, political instability and terrorism. Through its

commitment to real world impact, applied anthropology stands as a crucial discipline in the quest for sustainable solutions to complex human problems.

• Definition of Applied

Anthropology:

Applied anthropology is the practical application of anthropological theories, methods and practices to analyse and solve real-world problems. It involves the application of anthropological insights to contemporary social issues, ranging from health and education to development and human rights. It is also known as practical anthropology.

• Use of Applied Anthropology to Solve Problems:

By using ethnographic research, cultural understanding, and a community based approach, applied anthropology offers solutions to problems such as:

1. Social Inequality:

Applied anthropologists analyze cultural and structural factors contributing to inequality, enabling the design of policies that promote equity and social justice. By studying local customs, historical customs and power dynamics they can develop culturally relevant policies or interventions aimed at reducing discrimination, improving access to resources, or addressing systemic injustices. Applied anthropologists engage with marginalized communities to ensure their voices are heard in decision-making processes.

• Case Study: The Rohingya Muslim crisis in Myanmar (2017-Present)

The Rohingya are a marginalized Muslim minority in Myanmar who faced continuous discrimination and exclusion from basic civil rights. 2017 crises highlighted not only the human rights abuses but also profound social and economic inequalities they faced in Myanmar and Bangladesh. Applied anthropologists, such

as Dr. Iain McSweeney, studied their social, cultural, and economic struggles, and informed humanitarian aid and advocacy for their rights.

• Source: The Rohingya Crisis: Understanding the Social and Cultural Factors of Inequality. (2020)

2. Ethnic Violence:

Applied anthropologists can mediate in conflict zones, working to foster dialogue and understanding between groups/ conflicting groups. They analyze the historical roots of ethnic violence and roles that ethnicity identity and social structures play in fueling conflicts and violence. They can recommend long-term strategies for peace building and reconciliation.

Case Study: The Rwandan Genocide (1994)

In Rwanda, ethnic tensions between two groups led to a violent genocide.

Applied anthropologists, such as Gregory Stanton, analysed cultural and historical

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factors behind the violence. After the genocide, anthropologists helped design peace-building initiatives, fostering dialogue between communities and promoting reconciliation.

3. Political Instability:

Using applied anthropology, political systems, governance structures, and societal responses to authority in different regions can be studied. Applied anthropologists assess the socio-political landscape, providing insights into local governance and community needs. Their research informs policies that enhance stability by addressing root causes of unrest.

4. Terrorism:

Applied anthropologists study the socio-economic conditions and grievances that lead to individuals to extremism, helping to develop prevention strategies that consider local perspectives. They can help design programs that address the underlying causes, such as community-building initiatives, counter-narratives to extremist ideologies, or educational programs.

Case Study: The Rise of ISIS (2014-Present)

The ISIS rose to prominence in 2014, capturing large parts of Iraq and Syria. This extremist group engaged in violent acts, including terror attacks throughout across the globe. Applied anthropologists such as Dr. Scott Atran, researched the social and psychological factors behind radicalization such as identity crises and alienation. Their findings helped inform counter-

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based initiatives and alternative narratives.

• Conclusion:

Applied anthropology offers valuable insights into complex issues like social inequality, ethnic violence, political instability and terrorism. By understanding the cultural, social and historical contexts of these problems, anthropologists help create culturally appropriate interventions, promote social justice and support peace building efforts. Through research and community engagement they play a crucial role in addressing global challenges.