

The Importance Of Cultural Studies

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Abstract:

The paper highlights the importance of culture in today's scenario which reframes the life of an individual. This paper observes the challenges faced by the developed countries are due to the adaptation of new culture. By bringing people together, cultural activities such as festivals, fairs, or classes create social solidarity and cohesion, fostering social inclusion, community empowerment, and capacity-building, and enhancing confidence, civic pride, and tolerance. As culture brings togetherness by uplifting individual's status in the society. Culture helps build social capital, the glue that holds communities together. The cultural process streams across the border nation states which transcends boundaries and lead to globalization.

Key Words: Culture, Culture Community, Language, Adaptation, Adjustment, Human activity, Community, Socialization, Environment.

Introduction:

Culture comes from the German word — 'Kultur' meaning 'growing'. 'Culture' in social anthropology means "knowledge", it is the knowledge about humanity which is learnt or acquired but not inborn. Edward Taylor has given one of the oldest and a classical definition of culture as, "Culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society." It suggests that culture includes tools, weapons, fire, agriculture, animal domestication, metallurgy, writing, the steam engine, glasses, airplanes, computers, penicillin, nuclear power, rock-and-roll, video games, designer jeans, religion, political systems, subsistence patterns, science, sports and social organizations. For Taylor, culture includes all aspects of human activity: from the fine arts to popular entertainment, from everyday behaviour to the development of sophisticated technology. It includes plans, rules, techniques, designs and even the policies made for better living.

In everyday life, we make use of the term 'culture'. We speak about it very often in context to 'how culture exists', 'how culture is changing' and 'what are the elements that represent our culture'. Culture is all that man learns and acquires by virtue of being a member of society. A wide range of different representations of groups or individuals can exist in cultures. The concept of culture representation has an important place in the study of culture. Representation is that which connects meaning and language to culture.

It is an important element through which the term culture meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture. Use of language, signs and images which stand for a cultural community. Both, humans as well as animals adapt to the environment. However, animals have no external assets; thus, they depend totally on their biological organs. However, humans have 'culture' which helps in adaptation to the environment. Example Igloos protect Eskimos. This is a cultural condition. There is much more to the relationship between man and environment, other than just adaptation. Man not only adapts and adjusts to the environment, but also changes the environment to suit his needs and preferences. Unlike animals, human beings also have the ability to change their behaviour in response to a wide range of environmental demands. This ability in humans is known as plasticity which has allowed humans to survive under a wide variety of unfavorable ecological conditions. Some of the features of culture are as follows:

- Every human group has a culture. It differs from society to society. It also has different origins, that is, it is marked by uniqueness.
- Culture gives us a sense of pride due to togetherness. Culture is acquired – it is something **man is not born with, but something in which a man is born into**. It is something man learns by virtue of being a member of society.
- Culture is learnt through the process of socialization. As a social heritage culture transmits communication to the other members of a society. When an individual is born into a society, the social symbols, artifacts, etc. of his/her culture are passed on to him/her.
- Culture is gratifying as it satisfies the needs of its individuals. Example: Need for love and security is satisfied by the institutions of family and marriage. Culture tends to be patterned. It involves repeating similar approved behaviour, so that it has a recognizable form or structure. Example: Religious practices and customs are different in different communities. Culture tends to be integrated. It has consistent premises, values or goals which give it a unity. Example: If there is a festival, everyone celebrates irrespective of their caste or religion, thus culture is helpful in integrating people of different castes and religions. Culture can be institutionalized, it can exist and represent itself in a set of institutions and thus enable to create a notion of order. Example: Institutions of family and marriage help people have a stable and well-defined life.
- Culture is a 'continuum', which means that cultural traditions have accumulated without any break in continuity. The structure of culture is transmitted from one generation to the next and every generation adds, subtracts or changes what it inherits. This aspect of change and continuity shows that it is a dynamic process and is not stagnant. Example: Marriage, customs and traditions. People and societies come and go but culture continues

to survive. Culture is symbolic. It has a range of symbols, which represent both: the material world (dress, food) and non-material world (values, beliefs, and customs). Symbols are the conceptual devices used to communicate ideas to people. Example: Different types of flags convey different meanings to individuals. Culture is symbolic in nature; it includes the capacity to communicate through symbols. Example: In the Indian society, 'sindoor' and 'mangalsutra' worn by women symbolize that they are married.

Cultural studies emphasize focus on representation which refers to how the world is socially constructed and represented to us by ourselves in meaningful ways. The major stress of cultural studies is on the study of culture as the signifying practice of representation. For this, we need to explore the different meanings generated by texts, and the modes by which each meaning is produced in different contexts. Moreover, representations of culture and their meanings have a material aspect. These are embedded in sounds, inscriptions, objects, images, books, magazines and programmes on television. All this is produced, enacted, used and understood in specific social contexts.

Our daily life is surrounded and invaded by popular culture. For instance, music, soap operas on television, comic books and sports, etc. We cannot imagine our life without these. It is only in the industrial societies that we see this form of culture. In past, we only had high culture and folk culture. The difference between them was that high culture was mostly related to a small, literate and elite group which is the upper class. They encouraged and sustained such a culture. High culture relates to the classics of literature, the great traditions of art and sculpture. On the other hand, folk culture was mostly in relation to the folk people. It gave expression to the serious and significant in life. It was about birth and death, man and woman, child and adult, the seasons, justice, cruelty, fate and destiny. It was shared by everyone and commonly participated in.

Conclusion:

The folk people entertained themselves through it, especially on ceremonial occasions like weddings, religious holidays, celebration of harvest, etc. Industrialization brought about changes which have severely affected industrial capitalism and human culture. It is due to the mass production that we have a mass of consumer goods. There is also movement of people from villages to cities. Folk culture has receded mass culture and popular culture refer to the same thing, that is, culture manufactured wholesale for the market. Forms of popular culture include television soap operas, comics, magazines, popular music and cinema.

Reference:

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