

- To understand the relationship between culture and society we need to understand what a society is.
- Ralph Linton defines society as “an organized group of individuals. A culture is an organized group of learned responses characteristic of a particular society” (Linton, 1955:29).
- Society is a much larger concept and culture is an important part of the society
- A society is a group of individuals who interact and share a common culture.
- In other words, society refers to persons and groups; culture is the behavior patterns of these groups which emerge from communal living.
- Culture distinguishes a man from an animal. It shapes our attitude, beliefs, values and norms. So, culture and society cannot be separated.
- Giddens and Sutton (2014) say that sociology has always studied culture as bound up with social relations and the structure of society.
- The first definition of culture was given by E.B Tylor. He says, “Culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, & any other capability acquired by man as a member of society”
- Malinowski when referring to Arunta society, talks about the behaviour patterns like the customs, language, beliefs and also the ways of thinking feeling and acting which are important aspects of culture and also applies to any society.
- Abraham (2006) defines culture as “a total way of life of a social group, meaning everything they are, they do and they have. It is a complex system that consists of beliefs, values, standards, practices, language and technology shared by members of a social group”
- The unique aspect of culture is that it is highly variable and is also subject to change.
- While human heredity is a relatively constant factor, culture is variable.

#### CULTURE & BIOLOGY

- Humans and animal share the same biological traits like hunger, thirst, sex etc.
- Animals do have certain behaviour patterns like humans, but there are striking differences between the behavior patterns of both animals and humans.
- For example, hunger and sex urge are biological facts, but it is culture which determines how these urges are channelized.
- In human society, social behaviour is transmitted from generation to generation by communication in contrast to animals in which it is transmitted by heredity

- This distinguishes human society from the complex insect society as the insects are instinctive and do not learn to behave.
- Animals depend on their instinct but humans use their culture.
- Worsley (1970) says that culture can be transmitted through coding, classifying & passing experience through language, a distinctive human trait.
- Abraham (2006) says that every element of the culture has a function unique to the group which shares the culture
- Many customs and practices in a culture cannot be judged as right or wrong, unless it violative of human rights but are to be understood in terms of their function.
- Cultural relativism may lead to xenocentrism which is the opposite of ethnocentrism.
- Cultural Relativism : – The position that there is no universal standard to measure cultures by, and that all cultures are equally valid and must be understood in their own terms.
- Xenocentrism is the belief that other cultures is superior to one's own culture. It's essentially the opposite of ethnocentrism, where one's own culture is seen as superior.
- It can be said that a major difference between humans and animals is the inability of the animal to use symbols.
- But humans have a way of manipulating symbols and they even express abstract concepts using symbols.
- For example, the National flag or Sikh Kirpan.

#### CULTURAL TRAITS

- Traits are the smallest elements of a culture – like a ritual, celebration of different festivals etc which distinguish one culture from the other.
- Even touching feet, shaking hands, taking a particular diet, wearing a saree are all cultural traits.
- When cultural traits combine together they produce culture complex.
- Majumdar and Madan (2008) say that a culture complex is not an institution but is the outcome of interaction between several institutions.
- They are defined as the pattern of the interrelation of culture traits.
- Sutherland et al. (1961) says that kawa drinking is observed among the Samoans which is a culture trait of the Samoans
- But it is not only about drinking the non alcoholic beverage but there are rituals of preparing and serving the beverage, pouring out the first cup as a libation to the Gods, there is also a ceremonial

precedence of serving the kawa and the mythological belief in the background of the ceremony.

- So it is associated with cultural complex
- When similar cultural traits are found in a particular area it is called a culture area.
- For example, the different regions in India like The North-Eastern states, the states like Kashmir, Tamil Nadu constitute culture area.

#### CHARACTERISTICS OF CULTURE

- Culture is social
- It is acquired through social life. Human being is a social animal and has a culture of its own.
- Culture is shaped by our social interaction and is bound up with social relations within the members of a group.
- Culture regulates the behavior of the members of a group and fulfills man's needs like hunger, shelter, clothing etc.
- For Clyde Kluckhohn Culture is a design for living.
- Culture is defined as a social adjustment or the means by which man adjusts to his environment
- Culture is learned and shared
- Culture is shared through communication and cooperation by the members of a society.
- Culture is transmitted - Culture is handed down from one generation to the other and also between nations and people within the lifetime
- Ralph Linton says that the culture is the way of life of the members of a society. It is the collection of ideas and habits which they learn, share and transmit from generation to generation.
- Culture is symbolic
- Culture is dynamic – Culture is constantly undergoing change and often adapts to external forces.
- It also undergoes internal adaptation and change.
- Various parts of culture are integrated with each other to constitute a whole

#### MATERIAL & NON-MATERIAL CULTURES

- Sociologist William F. Ogburn distinguished between material and non material culture.
- Material culture refers to the objects which satisfies the material needs of human beings like houses, means of transport, factories, food items etc.
- They are the tangible aspects of society.
- Non material culture refers to non tangible aspects of culture like customs, ideas, beliefs, patterns of communication etc.
- Some anthropologists believe, only those aspects which can be communicated can be a part of culture
- Giddens and Sutton (2014) say that culture has always dealt with the non material aspect, it had not conventionally included the material artifacts
- Culture not only includes knowledge, beliefs, and practices but also includes manmade objects like

tools, buildings, means of transport and communication or various artifacts.

#### ELEMENTS OF CULTURE

##### LANGUAGE

- Language is the most important element of culture.
- The essence of a culture is reflected in the language
- Sapir- Whorf Hypothesis says that language is not 'given' but is culturally determined and through language reality is interpreted in different ways (Schaefer and Lamm 1999)
- For example, in the Arab world in which people depend on camels, there are 3,000 words for camels.

##### BELIEF & NORMS

- Abraham (2006) says that belief is a statement or idea about reality which people accept as true.
- But beliefs are not static and are subject to change over time
- People migrating to cities may shed off some of the superstitious beliefs.
- Norms are the prescribed rules of society which guides the behavior of the members of a society.
- Sutherland (1961) says that social norms are group developed and group held standards of behavior
- For Haralambos and Heald (2006) a norm is a specific guide to action which defines acceptable and appropriate behavior in particular situations.
- For example, in every society there are norms governing dressing patterns.
- Norms can be both formal and informal. Formal norms are written down and attract punishment when violated. Informal norms are not formally written down
- For Abraham (ibid.), formal norms are explicit norms like the explicit rules imposed by schools about uniforms etc.
- Norms are further classified into folkways and mores and laws.
- Folkways are the informal rules which guide our actions
- Mores are those folkways which are important for the welfare of the group.
- Sumner (1906) says, when the relation of welfare is added to folkways they are converted to mores.
- Laws grow out of mores and have a rational element in them or they are formally established rules.
- Mores are more strictly enforced than folkways but less strictly enforced than laws.

##### VALUES

- Values are the general guidelines regarding the conduct in society unlike norms which provide specific conduct.
- For Abraham (2006) values are agreements among members of the society
- They are generalized standards that define what is good or bad, ugly or beautiful.

- Values are the way people conduct themselves in society it reflects the orientation of individuals, groups towards achieving essential goals of society.
- For example, paying attention when national anthem is played, respecting elders is a value of the Indian society
- Different cultures have different value systems.
- American value system is different from Indian value system.
- Schaefer and Lamm (1999) give the example of Papua culture in which contributing to the public good is much more valuable than making a personal profit.
- Erasov and Singh (2006) mention families, relatives, older generation as values forming basis of cultural criteria

#### SANCTIONS

- Sanctions are penalties and rewards for social conduct of a person
- Sanctions can be both positive and negative.
- Schaefer and Lamm (1999) says that the norms and sanctions in a culture reflects that culture's values and priorities

#### MULTICULTURALISM

- Ethnic group is a community of people who share a common cultural background or they share certain common characteristics such as race, language, religion etc which differentiates them from other groups.
- Kymlicka (2012) defines multiculturalism as a legal & political accommodation of the ethnic diversity.
- He says multiculturalism emerged in the West as an attempt at replacing the older forms of ethnic and racial hierarchy with the ideals of democratic citizenship.
- Abraham (2006) says that "it is a principle of coexistence of different cultures which fosters understanding and appreciation of different cultures".
- A multicultural society is often equated with a 'salad bowl' in which all communities retain their distinct identities as opposed to a 'melting pot' in which the majority culture swallows up a minority culture.

#### GLOBALISATION & CULTURE

- Sunanda Sen (2007) says that "globalization is associated with the integration of the world, with the markets breaking open the barriers across nation states in terms of flows of trade, finance, technology, knowledge, culture and even movements of people"
- It led to the transmission of values, ideas, meanings and even movement of people around the world.
- Appadurai (1996) mentions five dimensions of global cultural flow as Ethnoscapes - The landscapes of persons such as tourists, immigrants, refugees and the movement of persons who affect the politics of a particular place.

- Technoscapes - The global spread of technology both material and informational across boundaries.
- Finanscapes - The rapid flow of money through currency markets and stock exchange.
- Mediascapes - The distribution of electronic capabilities like television, films to produce and disseminate information.
- Ideoscapes - The exchange of ideologies and counter- ideologies which consists of notions of freedom, justice, rights, democracy, sovereignty.

#### CULTURE IN INDIAN CONTEXT

- S.C Dube (1990) says that "the Indian society had covered a span of five thousand years since the period of its first known civilization.
- During this long period several waves of immigrant representing different ethnic strains and linguistic families have merged into its population to contribute to its diversity, richness and vitality"
- The Indian society has 22 official languages and hundred dialects
- The state of Nagaland itself there are nineteen languages. Religious faiths include Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism and even Baha'i faith
- People in India belong to different castes, sub-castes or jati and social classes
- Indian society is also a home to a number of tribal communities who have their distinct cultural identity and heritage.
- There is existence of different cultural traditions like the classical, folk and the tribal.
- In other words these traditions can be divided into little tradition and great tradition, the concepts coined by Robert Redfield.
- The little traditions are unwritten and are transmitted orally & the great traditions are written traditions and are found in literature and religious texts.
- Today's society creates division on the basis of division of labour, specialization of knowledge which separates the highly educated from the less educated.
- The most significant divisions among people is found in the field of educational attainment.
- Education which should be a great equalizer, instead it reproduces the existing cultural and social divisions.
- Pierre Bourdieu (1986) calls this 'cultural capital'.
- Apart from this religious, spatial segregation also brings in variability of culture in terms of manners, speech, activities, recreation.
- The cultural capital refers to the non-financial social assets that individuals possess and that can be used to increase their social mobility and opportunities. These assets include knowledge, skills

#### CULTURAL INTEGRATION

- India is a secular state and has a constitution which ensures that the identities of different communities are preserved
  - Moreover the different facets of culture like religion, music, art and architecture, painting, dance
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- and drama, habits and customs have contributed to the unity and integration of India.
  - In recent decades challenges like ethnic movements, religious fundamentalism, linguistic conflicts, regionalism were seen.



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