

CULTURE :- MEANING

In human life one of the most important aspects is that of culture. A study of human society inevitably means a study of its culture. Culture, therefore, is an integral aspect of our life.

Culture is a distinct trait of human society. A child is born and reared in a cultural environment. It is a unique quality which man acquires and it separates him from the other animals. Culture means something ripened as against the raw, crude and unrefined nature of man. 'Cultured' is referred to as educated and refined conduct of an individual as opposite to his raw instinctive urges.

DEFINITIONS

The following definitions of culture given by the eminent thinkers in this field will help to give a clear idea about the true meaning of the concept of culture.

(1) According to SOROKIN and MACIVER
"Culture stands for the moral, spiritual and intellectual attainments of man."

(2) According to REDFIELD "Culture is an organized body of conventional understanding manifested in art and artifact which persist

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through traditions characteristic of human group."

- (3) E. B. Taylor, "Culture is that complete whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capacities and habits acquired by man as a member of the society."
- (4) BOGARDAS believed that "Culture is composed of integrated customs, traditions and current behaviour patterns of human group" which help individuals to develop and mature.
- (5) C.C. North is of the opinion that culture "Consists in the instruments constituted by man to assist him in satisfying his wants".
- (6) Ralph Linton, "A culture is the configuration of learned behaviour, and the results of behaviour; whose component elements are shared and transmitted by the member of a particular Society."

The above definitions show that the key words of culture are shared, learned behaviour. A distinction may be made here between culture and Society. Culture is a System of organized behaviour pattern while Society is a group of people who follow the organized behaviour pattern socially inherited.

Characteristics of culture :-

From the above definitions it can be said that culture has the following characteristics.

- (a) Culture is acquired: Culture is not inborn, it is always acquired or learnt. The way an individual eats, cooks, dresses, talks etc. are all learnt from the cultural environment.
- (b) It is social: Culture is not an individual phenomenon. It develops through social interaction and involves the whole society. The traditions, customs, beliefs, morals, laws are adopted by the majority of a society, and not by an individual alone.
- (c) Culture is transmissive: Culture is transmitted from one generation to another. This transmission takes place through social processes like imitation, suggestion and identification.
- (d) Culture is continuous and dynamic: Culture is a continuous process which connects the past with the present and also makes provisions with the future. Ralph Linton called culture the 'social heritage' of man. It is also dynamic process. Though the speed may be slow, yet the cultural pattern and processes have undergone different changes since early times.

7) Culture fulfils our needs: Man has different needs which may be physical, mental, emotional and spiritual. All these are satisfied through culture.

8) Culture has a quality of idealism: Culture is idealistic, it refers to 'what should be', It stands for the ideal norms of behaviour, the embodiment of refinement. Culture always points out at the intrinsic value of things.

9) Culture varies from society to society: Every society possesses its own unique cultural traits. The socio-cultural patterns and processes of one society like values, beliefs, ideologies, philosophies etc. is different from that of another. Again, culture changes in the same society at different times.

10) Culture is integrative: Culture does not mean one aspect of the society, the different aspects like law, morality, traditions, habits, beliefs etc. are all interconnected and it represents the whole which is called culture.

11) Language is the chief vehicle of culture:

Culture is transmitted mainly through language. Language is the means through which human beings express themselves, to know about the past generations. Language is an integral part of

culture and helps in culture diffusion.

- (j) Culture is adaptive: Culture refines human behaviour, helps to acquire knowledge and necessary skills and consequently facilitates proper adjustment with the environment. It defines our attitudes, values and goals and provides opportunities for achievement of these ends. It, in short, moulds human personality.

Types of Culture:

Culture may be broadly divided into two types —

(a) Material culture.

(b) Non-material culture.

(a) Material culture: Material culture includes man made objects such as machines, tools, furnitures, weapons, clothing, shelter etc. The material culture of the society can be measured by counting the various items of material objects manufactured or invented by the members of the society.

(b) Non-material culture: The non-material culture includes such abstract things as literature, customs, language, art, morality,

customs, ~~language~~ knowledge etc. In other words non-material aspects of culture is inclusive of psychical achievement of the society.

The physical difference between the two is obvious, physical objects as against institutions and ideas. But do they stand for something basically different? Do they function with difference in culture? The answer is simply NO.

Because culture consists of all the shared products of human society. These products are material and non-material that we are closely interrelated.