

The Universalism in Indian tradition and Culture

Shivam Upadhyay

Research Scholar Department of Vyakarana Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri National Sanskrit University
New Delhi, India

Definition

Culture is the law of life. In our living style and thought process, Culture is the expression of our innermost self. Civilization and Culture are primarily considered as synonymous, whereas they both are different conceptions.

All the scholars of the world have given different definitions and explanations of 'Culture.' No universal definitions can be found but still 'Culture' is the name of those perfect ornamental or jewelled actions and efforts due to which human communities polish their inner and outer life, make their physical and mental strength Cultured, Developed and Determined. In capsule, Culture is a traditional and constantly growth-oriented style of human community, training of which makes a human cultured, exquisite, and evolving.

ORIGIN:

'Culture' ('Sanskriti'), is a word that has its origin in the Dhaatu "Kri" कृम् of the Sanskrit Language. Three words are formed from Dhaatu - 'Prakriti' (original state), 'Sanskriti' (sophisticated state) & 'Vikriti' (degraded state).The actual meaning of the word 'Sanskriti' is an excellent and improved situation which implies making a thing cultured and sophisticated to that degree where the end product will be able to receive admiration and respect, altogether.

TWO FACES OF CULTURE:

1. **Metaphysical Culture** (भावात्मक-संस्कृति)
2. **Physical Culture** (व्यावहारिक-संस्कृति)

In a general sense, **Metaphysical Culture** is a name that has come into existence from the word 'Culture' and **Physical Culture** is a name designated to 'Civilization.' These two faces of Culture are different from each other. Culture is internal and inclusive of traditional meditation, aesthetic experience, elaborate knowledge and religious faith.

Different communities of this world have come eye to eye with the distinct faces of that great humanistic culture by living through different historical traditions and living within different geographical situations. Through various types of religious practices, artistic endeavours, devotion to service and yoga-centric experiences, an individual receives wider and more fulfilling aspects respectively, which we make more comprehensive with the use of the word 'Culture.'

Civilization refers to the outer extreme state of a culture. **If culture is expansion then civilization is rigid stability.** In civilization, the physical face is primary whereas, in culture, the conceptual face is dominant. If civilization is the body, culture is its soul. Civilization tells 'What is with us?' and Culture tells 'Who We Are?' A Culture can become a Civilization only when it incorporates a written language, philosophy, characterization consisting of work division, complex law and a political system.' According to mythological beliefs, "**Civilization is the more complex and refined form of a Culture.**" There is a close-knit relationship between Culture and Civilization.

ISSN 2792-1883 (online), Published in Vol: 3 No: 3 for the month of Mar-2023

Copyright (c) 2023 Author (s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY). To view a copy of this license, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

The Caste which has a sophisticated and high culture is called 'civilized' and humans are called 'cultured.' Whoever is cultured, is civilized; and whoever is civilized, is cultured. If we think about it, a very subtle difference is discernible.

Culture and Religion:

There is a huge difference between Culture and Religion. Religion is personal. Religion is the relationship between the Soul and the Divine. Culture being an object of society, is an object of interaction. Culture draws inspiration from religion and influences it. It will not be wrong if religion is likened to a 'Lake' and culture to a 'lotus.' Culture is the invaluable asset to any nation or society. It is the treasure of continuous perseverance, experiments and experiences of the ages.

Indian culture is the eternal source of nectar, which irrigates the life of the individual- society- nation and makes it flourishing and fruitful. Indian culture is one of the oldest cultures in the world. It is believed that Indian culture is as old as the cultures of Greece, Rome, Egypt, Sumer and China. Many Indian scholars consider Indian culture to be the oldest culture in the world.

Characteristics of Indian Culture:

Indian culture is very distinctive due to life philosophy, personal and community characteristics, geography, development of knowledge and science¹, different societies², and castes. This difference is natural. Our Indian culture stands on universal truths and that is why it is dynamic and vibrant. *The immortality of any culture also depends on how development-oriented it is.*

A culture which cannot evolve and transform according to the demands of the era tends to lag. Indian culture considers the soul as primary. Purification of body and mind is also necessary. As long as the outer and inner part of man is not pure, he will continue to consider erroneous thoughts too, as correct and accurate.

The development of Indian culture has taken place on the basis of religion, which is why it has firmness. Indian culture gives personality to a person and encourages him to do great things, but it accepts the ultimate development of personality only at the social level.

Indian culture is the most ancient and rich culture in the world. The cultures of other countries have been getting destroyed along with the stream of time, but the culture of India has remained immortal with its traditional existence since ancient times. Its liberal and syncretistic qualities have absorbed other cultures but have kept the core of its existence safe.

The following are the main features of Indian Culture:

- 1. Coordination of spirituality and materiality.**
- 2. Unity in Diversity**
- 3. Acceptance**
- 4. Antiquity**
- 5. Continuity**
- 6. Flexibility and Tolerance**
- 7. Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam**
- 8. Public Interest and World Welfare.**
- 9. Environment Protection.**

¹ अयं निजः परोवेति गणनालघुचेतसां उदारचरितानां तु वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम्॥

² भारतीयार्थमर्यादा संस्कृतं संस्कृतिस्तथा॥

Willingness and Intervention in the Protection of Indian Culture:

India would probably be the only country in the world, where there is a kind of neglect to save, cherish and save its art culture. To make the Indian culture even more advanced, we must try to remove the defects which have been inculcated in our culture, only then progress can be possible in true form.

Today's era is the era of science. We have to progress the country by taking advantage of new scientific experiments. The era of false ostentation and superstitions has now passed. This is the era of awakening in which we have to proceed with great caution. Culture is the soul of any country, society or caste. From there they get a life. Social practices, behaviour, ethics, festivals, and the whole structure of community life in any country stand on the foundation of culture. The day this eternal stream of culture breaks, from the same day the external structure of that society also changes. As soon as the culture is destroyed, the building of any civilization stumbles and falls.

This imbalance in the development of civilization and culture gives rise to social disintegration. Therefore, to remove the imbalance and disorder created in society by this type of delayed culture, it becomes necessary to improve the physical culture through effort. Regulation of civilization and culture through analysis, testing and evaluation provides unique support for the physical and spiritual upliftment of human beings.

For The Protection Of Our Culture, We have to Bring The Following Things In Our Conduct:

1. Learn about our Religious Traditions.
2. We have to save our Ancestral Language.
3. Traditional recipes have to be handed down to the next generation.
4. The arts and techniques of culture have to be exchanged with others.
5. Spending time with other members of the community and society.
6. Management and participation in festivals of social and national importance.
7. Taking dignity and pride in culture and putting it into our practice.

The culture which runs on the basis of the workplace remains alive forever and becomes more powerful. It changes the entire structure by giving inspiration to the core of the individual and society.

Basic Elements of Indian Culture:

Indian culture is the best culture in the world, this is not a boast but a reality. Indian culture has been honoured as Dev Sanskriti. Today, when the entire culture is being attacked rapidly by Western civilization, it becomes even more imperative that every aspect of it, which is scientific and also has an impact on our daily life, we should present to the public. Do it so that the essential elements, the basis of our heritage- Arya Culture, do not get destroyed. Indian culture, which is prevalent on the world stage, should be tried to benefit the whole world in its universal form. The Atharva-Veda directed itself- **माताभूमि पुत्रोऽहं पृथिव्याः ॥³**

³ अथर्ववेद पृथिवीसूक्त- २०

Indian culture can be called the highest level of development of our mankind. All the sources of the development of the whole world – Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam come in its periphery. In our culture, from before birth to after death, there is a prescribed sequence of culturing human consciousness.

It is one of its important responsibilities that the sanskaras of animalism should not emerge in human beings. Indian culture forms the spiritual basis of human development and also takes the responsibility of developing the mind of a saint, reformer, or martyr in a human being to the level of Sage, Manishi, superman, or Angel. Indian culture has always given birth to great men and this is our biggest heritage.

Other characteristics of Indian culture are the centre of happiness, inner superiority, strictness with oneself, generosity towards others, the sacrifice of selfishness for the welfare of the world, not unethical- ethical earning, mutual tolerance, cleanliness – observance of cleanliness in daily life, towards family- and nation fulfilling one's moral responsibility, courage to fight against injustice – Manyu, for the satisfaction of the ancestors and the protection of the environment, expansion of greenery by planting trees at various places and understanding the purpose of incarnation and determining our role accordingly, Pujyavar has presented a very fact-based and logical explanation of all aspects.

The meaning of culture is that method of work which is full of rituals. How to control the unruly attitude of a person and how to make him cultured, this whole area belongs to the cultural leaders and our sages have paid maximum attention to this area.

Idol Worship: what is the scientificity behind the worship of symbols and what are the secrets hidden behind Shikha-Sutra, Tilak-Mala etc that our sages have given so much importance to them, from Shodash Sanskars to festivals and pilgrimages, fairs to storytelling, there is a wide spread of divine culture.

What is Polytheism – how to lead us to the path of worship of one Brahma through it, this whole philosophy and scientific explanation of beliefs like Shraddha- Tarpan etc. is also in this.

Varnashrama system is the speciality of our culture and it is a strong foundation stone for the good order of society. Today, many misconceptions have been spread in this regard, in fact, this legal system was made to bind human life and its social responsibilities in a fixed order. In this social aspect, food-drinking, caste species, high-low, language-dress, virtue-karma the sophistication of the culture, worship of the society, etc., have been described in detail. ***Guru, Gayatri, Ganga, Gau and Gita are considered to be the five important pillars of our culture.***⁴ By keeping reverence towards them, we enhance our cultural pride and dignity and through them, we also get many grants in our daily life.

Indian Culture can be called the highest level of development of our mankind. All the sources of development and growth of the whole world- Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam come within its periphery. In our culture, from the time we take birth to death or after death, there is a prescribed sequence of culturing human consciousness. It is one of its important responsibilities that the sanskaras of animalism should not emerge in human beings. Indian culture forms the spiritual basis of human development and by developing the attitude of a saint, reformer, or martyr in a human being, it also takes the responsibility of developing it to the level of Manishi, Rishi, Mahamanav, and Devdoot. Indian culture has always given birth to great men and this is our biggest heritage.

⁴ गीता गंगा च गायत्री सीता सत्या सरस्वती। ब्रह्मविद्या ब्रह्मवल्ली त्रिसंध्या मुक्तगेहिनी।।30।।

अर्धमात्रा चिदानन्दा भवघ्नी भयनाशिनी। वेदत्रयी पराऽनन्ता तत्त्वार्थज्ञानमंजरी।।31।।

इत्येतानि जपेन्नित्यं नरो निश्चलमानसः। ज्ञानसिद्धिं लभेच्छीघ्रं तथान्ते परमं पदम्।।32।।

Glory of the Gita - 8 | Bhagavad Gita Blog (wordpress.com)

Conclusion

Other characteristics of Indian culture are the centre of happiness, inner superiority, strictness with oneself, generosity towards others, the sacrifice of selfishness for the welfare of the world, not unethical- ethical earning, mutual tolerance, cleanliness – observance of cleanliness in daily life, towards family- and nation fulfilling one's moral responsibility, courage to fight against injustice – Manyu, for the satisfaction of the ancestors and the protection of the environment, expansion of greenery by planting trees at various places.

Indian culture can be called human culture in the true sense. Being situated on the principles of humanity, this culture has been able to preserve its existence in spite of all the traumas.

Today, to make the future of Indian culture bright, we have to forget all our communal animosity and make it tolerant. Only the liberal tendency of Indian Culture can make the future of our culture bright.

References

1. देश, समाज और संस्कृति- डॉक्टर चन्द्र सोनानि
2. संस्कृति के चार अध्याय- रामधारी सिंह दिनकर
3. Indian culture as heritage- Romila Thapar
4. The Argumentative India- Amartya Sen
5. Indian Culture and India's Future- Michel Danino