



## IMPORTANCE OF STUDY OF CULTURE.

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### **Introduction**

India had been under the rule of many royal dynasties in the past and there are many places of historical importance in this country. Against this backdrop of long history and distinct culture, research on these places of historical importance is the need of the hour. A study from cultural perspective is indeed very essential. India can boast of having a fascinating history and culture and home to rich legacy of literature, music, art, architecture, bravery and traditions. At the same time it has a fair share of jealousy, hatred, greediness and religious intolerance embedded in it as well.

The objective of the research should be to document the life and culture of people. One can observe a deluge of cultural symbols spread across the land in its history. Naturally the question arises regarding the meaning of the term 'culture'. Hence an analysis is required. Culture is meant to be the ideas, customs and social behaviour of the people or society. It is briefly understood as the creative impressions and upbringing of people. However, deeper understanding of it represents the way of life and the method of thinking of people living in an area. It is a social concept and connected to heritage of the people.

Beliefs, customs, traditions, rites and rituals of people, evolved by people differ from place to place. Each social group shows unique character and reflects the thinking pattern of its people. An individual growing up in an environment would deeply be influenced by it. Culture can also be understood as the values created by the conscious mind, intellect and emotions of the individuals.

The word 'culture' is derived from a Latin term '**colere**'<sup>1</sup> which means to tend the earth and grow, or cultivation and nurture. Hence it is identified with cultivation of soil or tillage.<sup>2</sup> The Ancient Roman orator Cicero introduced the concept of **cultural animi**, an agricultural metaphor for the development of a philosophical soul. Thus culture is basically a cognitive concept **Edward Burnett Taylor** defined culture as: "Culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society."<sup>3</sup> By this we can say that culture is combination of all the practices adapted by man to achieve perfection in his life.

**Swami Ranganathananda** a well known historian concludes "Wordly aspirations, emotions, emblems, beliefs, aesthetics, attitudes, social etiquette etc. accumulated in a particular society which pass down from generation to generation is called culture".<sup>4</sup> Giving up desires and aspirations and doing socially acceptable functions with firm faith in religion is culture. Good work, noble work and good manners are the important constituents of culture, according to Jainism.

**Mathew Arnold** defines culture in idealistic terms. According to him, Culture is the refined version of nature. If nature is the creation of divine law, culture is shaped by human beings. Aim of culture is to overcome animal instinct and realisation of human personality. It is an attempt to perfect the personality of the individuals.<sup>5</sup> Perfection for him is an internal thing related to mind and intellect and not related to outward conditions.

Culture adapts to the changing life style and continues to add new elements. The word culture is used both as a vernacular and as an indicator of language. It recognised regional variations. For example, While Indian culture, Greek culture, Karnataka culture, American culture and Japanese culture indicate territories, Tamil culture, Kannada culture, Marathi culture indicate language. But Munda culture, Brahmin culture, Gowda culture, Dalit culture, Gowda culture, bird pickers culture etc indicate discriminatory caste/class system. All these are different elements of culture, but not real culture. Culture encompasses everything and aims to refine human beings.

Considering all the above, a certain degree of specificity can be identified with culture. One can give a sociological meaning for culture as something which includes all material things related to the routine of life. Culture is the state of life that a community has evolved over a period of time. It is a collection of faith, ritual, tradition adopted by people in their lives.

An attempt has been made to study the cultural diversity and cultural changes by analysing birth, death, festivals, marriage, worship, local beliefs, dressing, food and lifestyle of people among different communities of people along with geographical and historical factors. It is the responsibility of the investigator to show the cultural dynamism and vanishing elements of culture.



In the primitive age, man led a nomadic life satisfying his basic needs. Gradually decided to settle in a fixed place; began cultivation and thus turned to civilized life. Family was the basic social unit. Families turned into tribes and then to villages and then state were formed. In the process language, behaviour, customs, rituals, traditions, dressing and food habits began to be evolved. When there were relations among clans, conflicts were bound to arise. Victorious clans formed their own territories and imposed their own whims upon the locals. It can be noticed in the pages of folklore and history that these clans bound in their own cultural framework began to enrich their cultural traits. Hence its not uncommon in history where royal dynasties were influencing their territories culturally and in the process were enriching culture of the land.

India is the land of villages. Names of each village briefly flashes through mind and forgotten. Uniqueness of these villages is rarely observed. When the root of the uniqueness is searched and analysed, every village and town in India exhibits very meaningful and peculiar details. In the age of globalization and modernization, it is sad that villages are gradually losing their cultural heritage. There is an urgency to document their uniqueness.

Villages of India, while undergoing modernization process are fast losing their / intrinsic character/original soul. In place of noble qualities like innocence, helping nature, cooperation, faith, harmony, negative qualities like arrogance, selfishness, fraud, disbelief are rooting in. Human relations are losing their ground. When we analyse these, greediness of the modern life style and yearning for luxurious life seem to be the reasons for this decadence. The objective of the study is to enlighten people regarding this and highlight the importance of old cultural values in the contemporary society.

**Hiremallur Eashwaran** says, “For two reasons there is a need to study Indian villages scientifically. Indian villages have been protecting the ancient culture and noble ideals of the land from the tyranny of the time. Western world which proceeds with an occupational view is astonished to find this cultural wealth. Villages which have been acting as fortresses are fast losing their originality. Hence there is an urgency to closely examine and shape the personality of the villages”<sup>6</sup>

Looked from this point of view, it is evident that the cultural life of villages is under the influence of modernization. But many basic elements can still be identified. If left alone, it may not be possible to find and understand them in future or they may disappear completely in due course. Even after the entry of modernity into village life, they still retain ancient rich heritage, tradition and rituals in abundance. While the cities of India are not ready to discard the traditions and rituals fully, there is a belief that villages would cherish them more fondly. However there is grave danger of cities engulfing the nearby rural areas. In spite of this, villages are able enough to restructure their traditions and uniqueness amidst modernity. As the entire world community has changed itself to be a global village, it is unfortunate that the rural culture and languages are treated ironically. Unless the uniqueness of the village culture is analysed and well documented, there is a grave danger of these factors being ignored as irrelevant in near future. Hence there is an obligation for us to preserve, study and document the folklore culture and traditions.

## References

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