

Essence of Traditional Knowledge
Dr.V.Vijayalakshmi
Associate Professor, SSL
Vellore Institute of Technology, Chennai

Hello learners

- In the last video, we discussed on the Concept of traditional knowledge, its significance, comparison between tk& SK, understanding of Indegenious knowledge and comparisons between Tk&WK
- Today in this video, we are going to discuss about Introduction to Culture, Culture and heritage of India and Characteristics

Culture

- Culture refers to the patterns of thought and behaviour of people. It includes values, beliefs, rules of conduct, and patterns of social, political and economic organisation. These are passed on from one generation to the next by formal as well as informal processes.
- Culture consists of the ways in which we think and act as members of a society. Thus, all the achievements of group life are collectively called culture.
- Indian culture is the oldest of all the cultures of the world. Culture is the soul of nation. On the basis of culture, we can experience the prosperity of its past and present.
- Culture is collection of values of human life, which establishes it specifically and ideally separate from other groups.

Culture – what it means

- The English word ‘Culture’ is derived from the Latin term ‘cult or cultus’ meaning tilling, or cultivating or refining and worship.
- In sum it means cultivating and refining a thing to such an extent that its end product evokes our admiration and respect.
- This is practically the same as ‘Sanskriti’ of the Sanskrit language.

Definition

- A common anthropological definition of culture is that of pioneer English anthropologist
- Edward B. Tylor (Primitive Culture, 1871):

Culture “is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.”

- Culture has two distinctive components, namely, material and non-material.
- Material culture consists of objects that are related to the material aspect of our life such as our dress, food, and household goods. MC includes technologies, instruments, material goods, consumer goods, household design and architecture, modes of production, trade, commerce, welfare and other social activities.
- Non-material culture refers to ideas, ideals, thoughts and belief. It includes norms, values, beliefs, myths, legends, literature, ritual, art forms and other intellectual-literary activities. The material and non-material aspects of any culture are usually interdependent on each other.
- Sometimes, however, material culture may change quickly but the non-material may take longer time to change. This process of lagging behind of Non material culture from Material culture is referred by William F Ogburn in his work *Social Change with Respect to Culture and Original Nature*.

Cultural Lag

- Cultural lag according to Ogburn refers to the imbalance in the rate and speed of change between these two parts of culture. Changes are quick to take place in the material culture. These in turn stimulate changes in the non-material culture. But the non-material culture may be slow to respond giving rise to a gap or a lag between the material and non-material culture. This lag is called cultural lag. For example, a good number of Indians have adopted western technology but they have not changes their traditional beliefs, customs etc.
- In popular parlance, the material aspects of culture, such as scientific and technological achievements are seen as distinct from culture which is left with the non-material, higher achievements of group life (art, music, literature, philosophy, religion and science).
- Culture is the product of such an organization and expresses itself through language and art, philosophy and religion. It also expresses itself through social habits, customs, economic organisations and political institutions.
- “Culture” encompasses objects and symbols, the meaning given to those objects and symbols, and the norms, values, and beliefs that pervade social life.

The main elements of culture

The main elements of culture are:

1. Cognitive Elements
2. Beliefs
3. Values
4. Symbols
5. Language

Elements

- Cognitive Elements- culture of all societies whether pre-literate or literate include a vast amount of knowledge about the physical and social world. The possession of this knowledge is referred to as the cognitive elements.
- Beliefs-Every sect within a culture having some beliefs for cultural refuge. These beliefs are responsible for the spiritual fulfilment of needs and wants. Beliefs in empirical terms are neither true nor false for example-Sikh wear bangle in one hand, keeping a dagger. The water of Ganga is sacred for Hindus.
- Values and norms – Values may be defined as measures of goodness or desirability. Anything getting importance in our daily life becomes our values. The origin of values is not biological but it is social production while living in society and values develop.
- Symbols-Culture is system of symbols. Symbols are anything used to represent express and stand for and event situation. Sign direct to guide our behaviour. It is used to show an event of past, present or future. A number of invented or artificial symbols are used in social life which assumes importance. Bowing head, whistling, winking of eyes situational are the symbols, which express a specific object idea about other. For example flag, anthem, picture, statues are symbols.
- Language- A group of words or ideas having common meaning and is shared to a social situation Is called language. Language is the entrance to a culture. Language is a source of communication and to transmit message from one person to another. Language differs from culture to culture. Language is like vehicle through which we can carry out our complex social activities.

Characteristics of culture

- Culture is social: culture does not exist in isolation neither it is an individual phenomenon. It is product of society. It originates and develops through social interaction. It is shared by the member of society. Man becomes man only among men.
- Culture is learned behaviour: Culture is not inherited biologically but it is learnt socially by a man in a society. It is not an in born tendency but acquired by man from the association of other, e.g., drinking, eating, dressing, walking, behaving, reading are all learnt by man.
- Culture is transmitted: Culture is capable of transmitted from one generation to next. Parents pass on culture traits to their children and they in turn to their children and so on. Culture is transmitted not through genes but by means of language. Language is the main vehicle of culture.
- Culture gratifying: Culture provides proper opportunities and prescribes means for the satisfaction of our needs and desires. These needs may be biological or social in nature but it is responsible for satisfy it. Our need for food, shelter and clothing and

desires are status, fame, money etc. are all for the examples which fulfilled according to the cultural ways

- Culture varies from society to society: Every society has its own culture and way of behaving. It is not uniform. Every culture is unique in itself is a specific society. For example values, customs, tradition, religion, belief are not uniform everywhere.
- Culture is continuous and cumulative: Culture exists as a continuous process. Culture is the memory of human race. Culture is not a matter of month or year. It is continuous process and adding new cultural traits.
- Culture is dynamic: It remains changing but not static. Cultural process undergoes changes but with different speed from society to society and generation to generation.

Thank you Learners.