

CHAPTER-18

MAN AND CULTURE



After studying this chapter you learn :

- Know the concept of culture and its development.
- Analyse cultural variety and tradition.

In our daily conversations, the word ‘culture’ is generally used to refer to good behaviour, customs, traditions and rituals. Let us see how this word is used in sociology.

The word culture is derived from Latin word ‘colere’, that means cultivate . Various sociologists have defined this word in different ways. Culture is that complex system involving knowledge, the arts, morality, law, customs, abilities and talents that we learn being members of society. In short, whatever we are, that is our culture.

Culture is shaped by the geographical features, traditions and needs of that particular society. That is the reason we cannot call one culture good and another culture bad. Culture is transmitted from one generation to another. The language we have learnt has been passed on to us by our elders. Culture is subject to change constantly. As you might have observed, the style of dressing, hairstyles, food habits have changed a lot over the past ten years. Thus the culture of one society differs from that of another society.

Cultural Diversity

Let us imagine that we are walking along a famous street in Bangalore, the capital city of Karnataka. We will get to see people dressed in various kinds of clothes, people belonging to different races and people conversing in different languages.

There cannot be the same kind of culture in any society. There will be different cultures depending on the religions and life styles followed by the people. We call this pluralistic culture.

Even when cultures vary, they can influence one another deeply. For instance, the chudidar worn by women is a kind of dress which has come from the Moghuls to us. In the same manner, the trousers and shirts that we wear, the English language that we speak have come to us from the British. In India we get to see a pluralistic culture consisting of hundreds of tribes, thousands of castes, many races and hundreds of languages. That is the reason why India is said to have unity in diversity.

Customs and Traditions

Now that we have understood what culture is and how diverse it can be. Let us know what constitutes culture. Culture is made up of beliefs, values, rules, social conventions and morals. These can collectively be called customs and traditions.

Freedom, true friendship, cleanliness, humility, patriotism etc. are values. Values can be understood as the behaviour expected of human beings by society. Values enable us to determine what is good and bad in every culture.

There are conventions and moral codes to complement rules. Conventions are the activities we engage in again and again in our daily lives. We engage in eating, sleeping, greeting and other similar activities according to the prevailing conventions without giving much thought to them. These activities are inseparable parts of culture. For example, you do not ask your teacher everyday how you have to sit down to eat or sit in the class. You will have learnt all of them just through practice of conventions. Conventions enable us to do our daily duties without any hesitation.

EXERCISES

I Fill in the blanks with suitable words :

- 1 Culture means _____.
- 2 Conventions are activities _____.
- 3 We get to see unity _____ in India.

II Answer the following in a sentence each :

- 4 What is culture?
- 5 Give examples of the cultural diversity in your environment.
- 6 What are customs and traditions?
- 7 Give examples for customs and traditions.

III Answer the following in four-five sentences each :

- 8 Give an example of a convention.
- 9 Explain cultural diversity.
- 10 Describe the various aspects of culture.

IV Activity :

- 11 Describe a fair held in your locality and discuss about it with your elders.
