

The Importance of Culture in Society

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ABSTRACT

This paper is to show that cultural values are very importance in every society. The research question in this paper is “why is the role of culture in important society?”² Tentative solution to this paper is that in order to peaceful coexistence in a society, a common agreement is needed. Because of that agreement will not cause any unpleasant effects based on this culture, it is essential for every society to have a standard culture that can follow for the members of society.³ Descriptive and evaluation methods will be used as research methods to this paper.⁴ This paper will contribute to understand cultural values and norms are very effective to guide for a good life and it is needed to follow it to become better communities.⁵

Key words: **cultural values, cultural norms, standard culture**

Introduction

A culture has been born together since the emergence at society. At the beginning of human history, human survival was hash, natty, brute and short. As much as people have awareness of the great nature, they have development their awareness because they have thought the fought for their survival when they learned to live in groups for their own survival, a society emerged. In order to live together peacefully in that society, they have to establish the ethics to be followed in accordance with their nature. When the gradual development at consciousness, they created the culture that has a fit accordance with their difference religion, according to the tribe. Culture of a society implies its general way of life. A society is an organized group of individuals. For systematic living, for an organized system of mutual relationship and for peace and happiness, different societies of the world have evolved their own different cultures. Culture thus implies a general behavior pattern of a society. It is an organized group of learned responses characteristic of a particular society. Customs, belief, languages, ways of thinking, feeling and acting constitute the culture of a society. Culture is closely connected with the essence of human activity. Culture shapes people’s understandings of good and evil, health and sickness, and life and death.

Culture differs from place and place and country to country. Its development is based on the historical process in a local, regional or national context. For example, the way of greeting other, clothing, food habits, social and religious customs and practice. In the words, the people of every country are characterized by their distinctive cultural traditions. A nation may have no own system of philosophy, but it cannot exist without its own culture. Culture is the necessary conditions, requisites for existence of each nation in both aspects of the material and spiritual life. So, in order to describe the role of culture, it is necessary to clarify the meaning of culture.

The Meaning of Culture

The Latin word “cultural” derived from “colere”, which means to tend to the earth and grow, or cultivation and nurture. Human beings are unique among all the creatures of the animal kingdom in their capacity to create and sustain culture. All people possess its own distinctive culture. The members of one behave differently in some

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²Research Problem

³Research Finding

⁴Research Method

⁵Contribution

significant respects from the members of every other society. In book “*The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*” defines culture as-

“The way of life a people, including their attitudes, values, beliefs, arts, sciences, modes of perception, and habits of thought and activity”¹

Culture consists of everything in groups during the life course from infancy to old age. It is the spiritual foundation of the society. At the same time, it is the spiritual foundation of philosophy. Culture in the broad sense of the world is the foundation of the existence of the humankind. Culture is the characteristics and knowledge, of a particular group of people, encompassing language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music and arts.

Philosophy of culture is a branch of philosophy. Philosophy of culture examines the essence and the meaning of culture. The term “philosophy of culture” was first used in the early 19th century by the German romanticist A. Müller. In “*The Evolution of Culture*”, described as-

“Philosophy had its beginning in the origin of man and culture. It has evolved and become diversified as an integral part of culture system.”²

The definition of culture from the philosophical point of view, culture is environmental compliance, spirituality, materiality, universality, individuality, and sociality and one can single out the unifying feature. According to Kingsley Davis,

“culture is complex whole including art, music, architecture, literature, science and all aesthetic technology, philosophy and social institutions, religious and moral and aesthetic values.”³

A culture is a way of life of a group of people-the behaviors, beliefs, values, and symbols that they accept, generally without thinking about them, and that are passed along by communication and imitation from one generation to the next. The various elements of culture can be divided into two categories. There are material culture and non-material culture.

Material culture is the physical objects of the culture. It consists of all the physical objects, art, architecture, artifact made of used by people to define their culture. These included homes, cities, pagodas, temples, mosques, offices, factories and plants, tools, means of production, goods and products, stores and so on. All physical aspects of a culture help to define its member’s behaviors and perception. Non-material culture consists of no physical existence such as ideas, knowledge, language and behaviors. Non-material culture refers to the non-physical ideas that people have about their culture. It is including belief, rules, values, norms, morals and language, organization. Non-material culture refers to several processes that a culture uses to shape its members thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

The term “western culture” has come to define the culture of European countries. Western culture has its roots in the classical period of the Greco-roman era (the fourth and fifth centuries B.C) and the rise of Christianity in the 14th Century. Other drivers of western culture include Latin, Celtic, Germanic and Hellenic ethnic and linguistic group. Nowadays, the influence of western culture can be seen in almost every country in the world. Like the western culture, eastern culture was heavily influenced by religion during its early development, but it was also heavily influenced by the growth and harvesting of rice.

In eastern culture, there is less of a distinction between secular society and religious philosophy than there is in the west. Hinduism becomes a major driver of

culture in India. Buddhism influenced in China, Japan, Laos, Thailand and Myanmar. The preexisting cultural ideas in these areas also influenced religion. It will continue to present the relationship between Culture and Civilization.

Culture and Civilization

Culture and civilization are allied terms and, therefore, no discussion of culture can be complete without a word about civilization and its relation to culture. Civilization refers to the collective desire and will of people with reference to their physical and social environment. The physical environment consists of physical nature, the climatic conditions etc. The social environment consists of the social conditions in which we live. From the beginning of human civilization, man has been engaged in the process of improving the social environment to make life more and more secure and comfortable. In his attempt to improve social environment, man invented means and devices, tools and implements which have helped him in better living. As Prof Pitrim Sorokin said, "Civilization refers to all man-made devices".

There are different ways in which the term civilization is defined. Culture and civilization refer to two distinct aspects of human life. The former implies consciousness of values while the latter refers to the utilitarian aspects of living. Civilization refers to the scientific and technological achievements of man. In the words of John Cowper Powys, "A civilization is culture that has risen to a level where it incorporates considerable variety, a high degree of control over the material world." History of human civilization is the record of man's struggle to evolve better and better ways of living. In this process he has exerted his physical and mental powers. Civilization, thus, implies constant human struggle for change, progress and betterment of living conditions. The natural tendency in man to change and improve his environment is the main cause of the continuous advancement of human civilization.

Human beings as conscious living creatures aim at unhampered satisfaction of their desires and needs. All the techniques and goods which help us in the satisfaction of desires and in better living conditions constitute civilization. The modern means of transport, entertainment and comfortable living indicate advancement of human civilization. The fact of this advancement can be well understood if we compare our present age with the conditions which existed two thousand years ago. Civilization has brought mankind closer to each other. This has made life more secure and happier. One may say that civilization has its negative features as well because the future has become uncertain due to the armament race among different nations. But when we compare the positive and negative aspects of modern civilization, we find that former is more important than the later.

Advancement of civilization from the earliest times to the present age may be considered to depend upon two important stages. The first stage covered the Neolithic passage from hunting to agriculture, that is, from the advent of man to development of agriculture as the means of existence. The next stage is covered by modern passage from agriculture to industry. Innumerable discoveries, innovations, improvements and developments were carried out by man during the course of thousands of years of civilization. But all these developments have been mainly in relation to agriculture and industry. Agriculture has been particularly important as a component of civilization. It made possible the developments of the social institutions of villages and towns and of trade. Agriculture and animal domestication stand for gigantic strides in technical development. Farming and food, production pushed man to civilization. It was followed

by specialization in other departments, making of things, building of houses, administration and treatment etc. Today we define civilization as life founded on agriculture, domestication and industry and based on a high degree of occupational specialization. Through thousands of years man has achieved accomplishments in architecture, weaving, painting, sculpture, pottery, political and economic ideology and administrative efficiency as symptoms of advancement in civilization. Culture is transmitted from generation to generation as social heritage, social tradition and social heredity. But cultural values are passed on to the successive generations in the same society of like-minded people. Cultural values can hardly be transmitted from one society to another society. Every society wants to preserve its own culture and therefore, there is always a greatest hesitation in adopting the cultural norms of a different society.

Civilization implies mastery of physical and environment conditions and the knowledge of the mastery gets transmitted from society to society without difficulty on the basis of usefulness. The effects of modern civilization have spread all over the world through increasing scientific knowledge and technological application. Civilization is a continuous process of change and development since man is never satisfied with the existing conditions and is always eager to achieve more. In short, while we want to preserve our respective culture, we are eager to change and improve our physical and social environment. Culture has many different components.

Components of Culture

The components of a culture can be brief stated as, (i) Customs and traditions, Every customs has functional explanation in a society. When such explanation is not possible a custom ceases to have cultural significance; (ii) Religion and religious practices. (iii) Language and literature. Culture finds expression through language and literature; (iv) Art and artistic activities- like literature. Art is an important component of culture as it implies creative activity of people; (v) Religious and social festivals. In Indian culture, religious and social festivals have very great significance in the expression of cultural life; (v) Social norms imply norms of behavior in a society and these differ from society to society, distinguishing different cultural patterns. Apart from these basic components of culture, there are many other elements which express the cultural life of a people. For example, we cannot ignore elements like pattern of houses, tools and implements used in the act, people's conception of the world and ideas about man's place in the world. In short, all that which shapes life of people in the society may be included in culture. It is clear that the role of religion is very important in many aspects of culture.

The Importance of Religion

Religion is among the earliest and most profound forms of human activity. In tendency and outlook it is closely related with philosophy. But it is certain that man was religious long before he started philosophizing. In primitive men the phenomena of nature evoked feelings of awe and wonder and this stimulated in them certain religious acts. With the process of development of human beings, civilization, religion and religious activities came to be associated with certain rites, ceremonies, dogmas and even superstitions. But all these acts were accepted on the basis of belief and faith. Religion as a constituent of moral principles and religion as implied in ceremonies and ritualistic practices. It has influenced deeply the life of man from the beginning of human civilization.

At a very early stage of civilization, it is accepted that religion is a binding force. Religion consists of the essential rules of right living. Religion has made a great contribution in the preparation of a moral basis for human life. In making a distinction between religion and morality it is clear that besides faith in the existence of God or other transcendental beings, religion cannot be separated from morality. All religions have extolled moral virtues and have urged men to follow the path of truth, goodness and righteousness. Religion has always worked as a great factor of unity for mankind. So, religion is also needed to peaceful coexistence for every society.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be concluded that culture is invented by human beings at the beginning of the world. It is a unique possession of human. Man is born and brought up in a cultural environment. Man is not only a social animal but also a cultural being. Man cannot survive as a man without culture. No one can develop human qualities without culture. Culture distinguishes, leads, changes the personality of the individual and structure of the group. Culture stands for values and activities which contribute to the enrichment of human life. The enriched life is characterized by expansion of consciousness. Culture is not the sole instrument of human progress, but real progress cannot be measured except in terms of culture. Among the importance of culture's influence on society, the psychological influence of religion is more important. The reason is that people carry out physical and mental actions due to the driving force of the mind.

Religion today must relate itself to what man essentially is. It must see that development of man should be such that he remains established in his pure and essential state. Religion must awaken man and create in him the consciousness of his real self. Without implying any mystery, religion as an enlightening force should emphasize man's sense of values and his feeling of obligation. In this sense religion is inseparable from action. Science has changed the human situation by increasing the boundaries of knowledge. Man now has greater control over Nature. But the most tragic aspect of the situation is that man has become hostile to himself which is a great setback to civilization. Religion today must create consciousness of this situation so that man tries to develop a way of life with its basis in the recognition of man as an end in himself. There should not be excessive institutionalization of religion as it undermines man as a human being. "Man is the greatest truth and the highest value and above him there is nothing" religion should declare this. Religion thus conceived is- the-religion of man showing a road that promises to lead us to the joy of living.

Today, many things happening in the world, socio-economic and many conflicts we face are occurring uncontrollably due to the development of modern civilization process and especially of people's ignorance. The relevant religious teachings are dignified existence of others. They are able to demonstrate the progress of their religion by being able to conceive them by actions such as being kind, avoiding danger, and standing honestly. Many people in the world do not know what to do with their lives and how to truly use their lives. Religion can provide the answer to these problems. A life without religion is like a ship without an anchor. Therefore, among the many cultures religions are essential for various human societies. So, we may evaluate that religion is one of the most important cultures for society.

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