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## UNIT 22 CULTURE II : DIVERSITY AND CHANGE

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### Structure

- 22.0 Objectives
- 22.1 Introduction
- 22.2 Culture and Environment
- 22.3 Culture and Society
- 22.4 Culture and Language
- 22.5 Structure of Culture
  - 22.5.1 Cultural Patterns
  - 22.5.2 Cultural Traits and Cultural Complex
  - 22.5.3 Cultural Symbols
  - 22.5.4 Cultural Ethos
  - 22.5.5 Cultural Areas
  - 22.5.6 Major Components of Culture
- 22.6 Cultural Diversity
  - 22.6.1 Cultural Diversity in India
  - 22.6.2 Cultural Diversity and the Unity of Mankind
- 22.7 Cultural Conditioning
  - 22.7.1 Purity and Pollution in India
  - 22.7.2 Cultural Relativism
- 22.8 Cultural Change
  - 22.8.1 Acculturation and Diffusion
  - 22.8.2 Diffusion of Paper Making
  - 22.8.3 Story of the Alphabet
  - 22.8.4 Diffusion and Language
- 22.9 Let Us Sum Up
- 22.10 Key Words
- 22.11 Further Readings
- 22.12 Model Answer to Check Your Progress

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### 22.0 OBJECTIVES

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After going through this unit you should be able to describe that:

- Culture and environment are closely related;
- Language is one of the most important agencies through which elements of culture are shared among the members of society, and through which cultural traditions are transmitted from generation to generation;

- Though culture constitutes a unity of whole, it can be analytically separated into its constituent elements, such as traits, patterns, symbols and ethos;
- Cultural diversity and cultural conditioning are the two major dimensions of the concept of culture; and
- Culture is subject to changes over time.

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## 22.1 INTRODUCTION

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In Unit 21, you have learnt about the main characteristics of culture, You have learnt how culture has played a crucial role in the survival of human race, and how it represents the fulfilment of human beings' unique capacities.

You have also learnt about the relations between culture and biology; the diverse ways in which human beings basic needs are satisfied; the manner in which the processes of health and sickness are influenced by cultural factors; and the extent to which the roles of men and women are defined by culture,

In this unit, we shall carry the discussion further and bring out the relation between culture and environment, as well as, between culture and language. In this unit you will learn about the manner in which human behaviour is organised and regulated in terms of traits, symbols and ethos.

This unit will provide you with a better understanding of the variations and differences which exist in groups of mankind in all aspects of life, as well as the ways in which these differences persist and are passed on from generation to generation.

You will also learn how cultural artefacts, traits, inventions and innovations spread from one region to another. The processes of cultural change are explained with concrete illustrations.

It is hoped that the two units 21 and 22 will considerably enrich and expand your understanding of human behaviour. By sharpening your perception and sensitivity, these units will hopefully provide you with a broader and truly human perspective on mankind.

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## 22.2 CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

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You have learnt in the foregoing unit that culture played a crucial role in the successful adaptation, and thereby evolutionary survival of mankind. Such innovations and inventions as the discovery and use of fire, the domestication of plants and animals, the making of tools and implements, and the use of language greatly helped human beings in meeting the challenges of the environment.

Both human beings and animals have to adapt themselves to the natural environment. The adaptation of animals is governed by instinctual mechanisms. Human being, on the other hand, adapts herself or himself to the environment in a variety of ingenious ways. The great apes, who are zoologically the nearest to human beings, can survive in tropical conditions and on specialised diets only in very limited numbers. Human being is capable of living and multiplying on various sorts of diets in all kinds of environmental conditions. Thus the Eskimos have lived in the freezing cold of the Arctic; the Lapps who move with the reindeer and live on its milk and meat, have survived and multiplied in the Iceland of Scandinavia; similarly, the Bushmen, who live on wild roots, berries and plants, have managed to survive in the hot, sandy deserts of South Africa.

The environment may be seen as a dependent or an independent variable in different situations. A harsh habitat, such as the Arctic or desert regions offers a strong challenge to human communities, particularly when their economic and technological resources are limited and simple. Consider, for example, the Bushmen of the Kalahari desert in South Africa, who hunt ostriches in an ingenious manner. The Bushmen hunter with his small bow and arrow, disguises himself under the skin of an ostrich, which is mounted on a frame. Then he cautiously joins the herd of ostriches, and imitates their movements so cleverly that the ostriches do not suspect his presence at all. When he comes closer to an ostrich, he quietly throws his arrow at it, killing the animal.

Water is of paramount importance to the Bushmen since the Kalahari desert is one of the most inhospitable desert regions in the world. They store water in ostrich egg shells. In addition, they suck roots, bulbs and fruits which contain moisture or liquids.

The interplay between culture and environment is best illustrated through what anthropologists refer to as transhumance. The pastoral nomads move about with their livestock from one region to another in search of fresh pastures. The pastoral Fulani of West Africa, for example, move with their animals almost constantly in search of fresh grazing lands. The Gujjars of Jammu and Kashmir and the pastoral nomads of Nepal move in late spring and summer to pastures at hills where they live in camps.

The failure of monsoon in certain regions for two or more successive years sometimes forces the farmers to abandon their villages. They come to be heavily dependent on their flocks of sheep, goats and other animals, and quite often move with their herds in search of water and grazing land. In the course of time, many of them shift from agriculture to pastoral nomadism.

Different groups, who live under the same environmental conditions, sometimes adapt themselves to the environment in different ways. Consider for example, the Eskimos of North America. They build their snow houses, called igloos, with blocks of snow. The igloo provides shelter and comfort in the freezing cold of the Arctic. The Eskimos hunt the walrus and survive on its flesh and fat. The walrus ivory is used for sledge runners and for the water-proof boats, known as *kavaks*, in which the Eskimos go out on hunting expeditions.

When we compare the Chukchi and the Yukaghir of the Siberian Arctic, who live under the same harsh climate, as the Eskimos, we find a different pattern of adaptation. The igloo is unknown to them. Skins are attached to a wooden frame, which serves as a shelter. Unlike the Eskimos, who are hunters, the Siberian tribes are herders, depending on the reindeer. The reindeers feed on the tundra, and when there is hardly any **tundra** left for the reindeers to graze on, the Chukchi and the Yukaghir drive off their herd to a new grazing ground. The women, who are left behind along with the children, dismantle the skin tents, pack them on the reindeer, and follow the group.

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## 22.3 CULTURE AND SOCIETY

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Society is perceived as a chain of social relations among groups of individuals who are held together by commonly shared institutions and processes. All processes of human life-cycle are carried out and regulated in society. Thus, there is an integral reality of the individual, culture and society. All these are mutually inter-dependent, so that any one of them cannot be adequately understood without reference to the

other. Culture depends for its existence and continuity on groups of individuals whose social relations form society.

Human being is generally defined as a social animal. However, their social nature is not particularly unique to them. A society can exist at the sub-human level. Ants and bees, for example, have genuine societies. The chimpanzees and Gorillas in the wild live in their society much like human beings: they form stable relationships; they move about and hunt in groups.

Culture exists only in human societies. There can be an animal society without culture, but no human society is found without having to own culture. Consequently, what differentiates men and women qualitatively from other species of animals is not their social nature, but their culture. Human being is essentially a cultural or symbolic animal.

In actual life, society and culture cannot be separated. Even though culture is a broader category, it cannot exist and function without society. Society, in other words, is a necessary pre-condition for culture. Similarly, neither society nor culture can exist independent of human beings.

In the same way culture and civilisation are closely related. Civilisation refers to a historical phase of culture. A civilisation is characterised by certain distinctive features, such as cities and urbanisation, occupational specialisation, monumental structures such as temples, places and tombs, classes and hierarchies, and above all, the art of writing. Civilisation emerged for the first time in human history in ancient Mesopotamia during the 4th millennium B.C.

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## 22.4 CULTURE AND LANGUAGE

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You have learnt in Unit 21 that human beings capacity for symbolic communication or language sharply differentiates them from other animals. Language plays a crucial role in the process of enculturation, whereby the individual acquires and imbibes the values, beliefs, customs and habits of his society. Language facilitates the sharing and accumulation of experiences and skills; it is also instrumental in the transmission of cultural traditions from one generation to another. Language has played a pivotal role in the evolutionary survival of *homo sapiens* and the continuity of human society.

Language is learnt and acquired by the human child in a social and inter-personal context. A human being's mind is especially programmed for learning language, and a child of average ability can master any complex language of the world, be it Chinese, Sanskrit or Arabic. The primates, such as monkeys and apes, have quite an elaborate repertoire of gestures and sounds, which serve as the basis of primate communication. A rhesus monkey has a vocabulary of somewhere between forty and hundred sounds and gestures, which are understood by the members of the tribe. They all share the same vocabulary and use it in exactly the same way, without any variations or re-combinations. Human languages, on the other hand, are characterised by infinite variations in respect of vocabulary, usage and expression. The Oxford English Dictionary, for example contains 2,50,000 words, many of which are derived from scores of other languages.

Language reflects the cultural patterns and traditions of people. The Eskimo language, for example, has twelve different words for different kinds of snow, which cannot be adequately rendered into English or any other language. This is because snow occupies a central place in the life of the Eskimo. Similarly, the Arabic language has scores of words for the camel, for which there could be no exact equivalents in

English. The life of the Bedouin nomad in the Arabian desert is centred around the camel. The Navaho Indians, who are pastoral nomads, move continually from one pasture to another with their flock of sheep. Their cultural life is reflected in their language, folklore, myths and legends: their gods and heroes move restlessly from one place to another. The caste system occupies a central place in the Indian society. Aspects of caste, such as ritual ranking and notions of purity and pollution, are reflected not only in behaviour patterns but also in the vocabulary and usage of Indo-European and Dravidian languages. Thus, aspects of culture, which are of central importance to a people, find an extensive elaboration in their language.

Language not only reflects the cultural traditions of a people, but it also influences their perception and thinking. Linguistic patterns in other words, condition, perception and thought. The Zuni language has a common term for orange and yellow; correspondingly the Zunis make no distinction between these two shades. The Hopi language has two grammatical categories, which do not exist in English and many other languages. The first category has names only for temporary events, such as thunder, lightning. The second category has names only for long term events, such as stars, man. The distinction in the Hopi language between these two categories is indicative of the manner in which the Hopi people organise their experience. Many Dravidian languages and also a few contiguous Indo-Aryan languages like Marathi have two First Person Plural Pronouns called Inclusive (of the listener) and Exclusive (of the listener). The distinction is culturally important for them. Thus, the relationship between culture and language is one of mutual interaction and influence.

### Activity 1

List at least two differences in linguistic usage which have cultural connotation, such as, dating in the West, in our own Indian language (Hindi, your Mother tongue/Father tongue). Compare your list with those of other students at your Study Centre.

## 22.5 STRUCTURE OF CULTURE

Culture is constituted by inter-related parts of elements. The internal organisation of culture comprises its structure. The term culture is essentially an abstraction which is derived from an observation of human behaviour. Human behaviour is organised and ordered in terms of traits and patterns. Similarly every culture possesses a unifying principle, a philosophy of life, which permeates every aspect of it. In what follows, we shall examine the structure of culture in terms of patterns, traits, symbols and ethos.

### 22.5.1 Cultural Patterns

A cultural pattern refers to an ordered sequence of behaviour. It represents a form of behaviour which is shared among the members of a given community or group. In western society, for example, a man is expected to raise his hat while greeting a lady on the street. This is a cultural pattern. In Indian society, one touches the feet of his/her parents, elders and teachers as a mark of respect towards them. This is also an example of a cultural pattern.

Cultural patterns are of two types; ideal cultural patterns and actual behaviour patterns. Ideal cultural patterns define how the people of a society should behave in particular situations. But people do not always behave according to the ideal patterns as

defined by their society, they sometimes deviate from them. Actual behaviour patterns refer to the manner in which people actually behave in particular situations.

A cultural pattern generally combines two or more elements in a given culture. The pattern of plough agriculture, which first originated in Western Asia, comprises the following elements: the plough, animals to draw the plough, domestication of these animals, grains of rice or wheat to be sown, and fertilisation with dung.

The tradition of untouchability which has been abolished way back in India at the time of framing of our Constitution in India comprised the following elements: the notion of inequality among human beings, the ranking of individuals and groups in terms of high and low, the association of ritual purity and pollution, birth and occupation, food and touch.

### 22.5.2 Cultural Traits and Cultural Complex

A cultural trait is the smallest identifiable unit of a culture, such as bow and arrow. The system of primogeniture, which is prevalent in most parts of India and other countries and according to which the eldest son succeeds his father after his death, is an example of a cultural trait.

A cultural complex, on the other hand, is an aggregate of traits. The jajmani system, which was prevalent in many parts of rural India, provides an illustration of a cultural complex. The jajmani system refers to a complex network of economic, social and cultural relationship 'say' between a food producing family and an artisan family. ; A farming family, for example, get its agricultural tools and implements made and repaired by the former a part of the crop at harvest-time. Thus, the jajmani system, which represented a reciprocity of relationship, functioned as a cultural complex. However, in recent times this cultured complex has more or less disappeared even from our rural societies.

### 22.5.3 Cultural Symbols

Every culture bestows a special meaning and significance on certain objects and things. Material objects, colours, figures, and gestures thus assume special importance for the members of a given culture. They represent cultural symbols.

A flag, for example, is the symbol of a nation. The **bindiya** or **bottu** on the forehead of some Indian women is a traditional symbol of her married status. The use of **sindoor** or vermilion in the parting of her hair is also a symbolic index of the same. The sacred thread worn by Hindu men in India is a symbolic index of the same. It is a symbolic pointer to their *dwija* or twice-born status. The vertical or horizontal marks made with ash or coloured powder on the forehead of an Indian is a symbolic mark of his/her caste and sect. The Nagas of Assam believe that the forehead is the special seat of the soul, which needs to be guarded from the evil effect of strangers. This is done by pasting on the forehead a small fragment of the leaf of wormwood. This cultural symbol is believed to be efficacious in warding off evil influences.

### 22.5.4 Cultural Ethos

A culture has two distinctive, but inter-related, aspects. One can be described as **eidōs** or the external form of a culture, and the other as **ethos** or the world-view of a people, their conception of the world and of man's relationship with the world. The **eidōs** includes the formal structure of a culture, such as its institutions, customs, habits, rituals and behaviour patterns. The **ethos** of a culture refers to its total quality, the system of ideas and values which permeates and dominates the whole culture.

The ethos of Indian culture is expressed in terms of the concept of **dharma** which refers to moral duty or right conduct. It is often described as “the Foundation of the Universe” in the Indian philosophical thought. The concept of **dharma** finds expression in the four life-stages (varnashrama dharma): student, householder, forest dweller and ascetic. Each of these stages is associated with a distinct set of duties and obligations.

### 22.5.5 Cultural Areas

The area in which similar cultural traits are found is called a cultural area. The great regions of the Pacific, such as Australia, Polynesia, Micronesia, Melanesia and Indonesia are described as cultural areas, because each one of them is marked by a concentration of distinctive cultural traits and features.

The present boundaries of states in India, which have been drawn on the basis of languages, generally represent cultural areas. For example, Rajasthan, Kashmir, Assam and Tamil Nadu are distinguished from each other not only in respect of the languages but also in regard to certain distinctive cultural traits and characteristics. The north-eastern region, in a general sense, may be regarded as a cultural area. Similarly, the Dravidian south could be broadly regarded as a cultural area, which differs from North India in respect of temple architecture, kinship system and language. However, it should be kept in view that a large cultural area also possesses internal variations.

### 22.5.6 Major Components of Culture

A culture constitutes a structural unity, in that its various elements or constituent parts are mutually inter-related and inter-dependent. However, it is possible, for the purposes of analysis and understanding to delineate the major components or divisions of culture.

The major components of culture, which are universal in nature, can be analytically separated into the following units:

- i) **Technology** : it refers to the system of tools, implements and artifacts, made and used by a people to meet their basic needs.
- ii) **Economic organisation** : it includes the techniques which are employed by a people in organising the production and distribution of goods and services.
- iii) **Social organisation** : it refers to the framework of social and inter-personal relations.
- iv) **Political organisation** : it refers to the ways and methods of controlling conflict, and deals with the maintenance of the social order.
- v) **Ideology** : it includes a guiding set of beliefs, values and ideals.
- vi) **Arts** : that is the forms which ensure the fulfilment of human beings’ aesthetic urges.
- vii) **Language** : it is the medium through which all the above operate.

### Check Your Progress 1

**Note:** a) Use the space below for your answers.

b) Check your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

- 1) Bring out the relationship between culture and environment in a paragraph of about ten lines.

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- 2) Tick the correct answer

- i) Language has played a pivotal role in the evolutionary survival of homosapiens. Yes    No
- ii) A cultural trait is one of the largest identifiable unit of a culture. Yes    No
- iii) Technology refers to the system of values and beliefs in society. Yes    No

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## 22.6 CULTURAL DIVERSITY

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Mankind is characterised by tremendous diversities not only in regard to observable features but also in respect of languages, religious beliefs and practices, customs and traditions, and rituals and ceremonies.

You have learnt in Unit 21 that human beings basic needs are satisfied and regulated through culture. Infinite variations exist in the ways in which these needs are satisfied, in the manner in which human groups and communities adapt themselves to the environment, as well as in the expression of universal cultural patterns such as religion, language technology and art. We shall explain cultural diversity with some illustrations.

There are great variations among different human groups in regard to the disposal of the dead. The Jews, Muslims, Christians and several other communities bury their dead. The Hindus cremate the dead. The Parsis in India expose the dead bodies to vultures. The ancient Egyptians mummified the dead bodies of kings, queens and other important individuals. In India, dead bodies are sometimes set afloat in the river Ganga. In addition to these there are other methods of the disposal of the dead, which are practised by human communities in various parts of the world. These include, seafold burial, simple abandonment, dismemberment and setting away in vaults or canoes.

Likewise, religious beliefs, practices and rituals exhibit great variations. Most primitive people believe that natural objects and phenomena such as trees, rivers and the stars, have souls. This is known as *animism*. Others believe in totemism, in which certain species of animals are ritually associated with a clan or a tribe and worshipped



as its ancestor. The Australian aborigines, for example, trace their descent from an ancestor, who is symbolically identified with a honey, ant or kangaroo. Many primitive people also worship the souls of their dead ancestors. On the other hand, there are religions such as Hinduism which believe in a multiplicity of gods and goddesses, and which hold that the divine essence permeates the whole universe. Monotheistic religions such as Judaism and Islam believe in supreme God who is the master and creator of the universe. Buddhism has no notion of a supreme being.

### 22.6.1 Cultural Diversity In India

Cultural variations exist in all groups of people world wide. Consider, for example, Indian society, which has scores of languages and dialects, beliefs and rites, customs and traditions, habits and behaviour patterns. We shall provide a couple of examples to illustrate the extent of cultural diversity in India.

The Brahmin constitute a single *varna*. However the Brahmin in different parts of the country are not a culturally homogeneous group. They are divided into hundreds of castes and sub-castes called jatis who marry only among themselves. There are great variations among the various Brahmin sub-castes in respect of language, food habits, customs and rituals. The Brahmin sub-castes are divided into two major sects, the Vaishnava and the Shaivite. These sects are divided into numerous smaller sects. For example, in South India, the Vaishnava are divided into Madhava and Shri Vaishnava. The Shri Vaishnava in turn are sub-divided into northern and southern sects. In North India, the Vaishnava are divided into worshippers of Rama and worshippers of Krishna. the worshippers of Rama are sub-divided into Madhava and Ramanandi. The worshippers of Krishna are sub-divided into Chaitanya and Radha-Vallabha.

There are significant variations among the various Brahmin sub-castes in respect of food habits. The Kashmiri pandits eat meat, but not fish. The Maithili Brahmin of Bihar eat meat and fish, but not chicken. Similarly, the Bengali Brahmin and the Saraswat Brahmin eat fish. The Punjabi, Gujarati and South Indian Brahmin on the other hand are strictly vegetarians.

There are differences in the various regions of India in respect of dress pattern. In eastern India the ritual wearing of unsewn garments is widely prevalent. Similarly, one can enter the inner sanctum of a Jain temple only while wearing an unstitched piece of cloth. The Brahmin of eastern Nepal eat their food only while wearing unsewn garments. However, as one moves from Bengal to Western and Northern India, unsewn garments are replaced by stitched garments.

### 22.6.2 Cultural Diversity and the Unity of Mankind

Cultural variations among the various peoples of the world may appear to be confusing and mind-boggling. However behind the facade of diversity lies the fundamental unity of mankind. All human beings, regardless of social and cultural differences, belong to a single biological species **homo sapiens**. All human groups and populations can inter-breed and produce their own kind. Moreover all human communities share the cultural universals: the capacity for learning and acquiring culture, the capacity for language, incest rules, funerary rites, institutions such as marriage, family and religion, among others.

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## 22.7 CULTURAL CONDITIONING

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Human beings, as individuals and as members of groups think, feel, and behave in certain ways because they have been brought up under certain conditions in a given

society or community. The culture of a people influences their perception and attitudes, their values and beliefs their habits and customs. In other words, it is largely our culture which forms our character and builds our personality. This fact is known as cultural conditioning.

A culture influences and conditions people to attach a special meaning to certain objects, things and colours. Certain colours, for example, are regarded as auspicious and are used during festive occasions, ceremonies and rituals. Red is considered auspicious in most parts of India. Brides are dressed in red in Gujarat, Rajasthan, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and several other regions. Green has a special cultural significance in Maharashtra. When a girl reaches puberty, the first sari presented to her by her parents is green. The bridal dress is green. A woman wears a green sari during pregnancy. When her son is married, she receives a green sari as a gift from the bride's mother. In South India, particularly Andhra, yellow is considered auspicious at marriages, house warming ceremonies, and religious functions.

You have learnt in unit 21 that food habits are influenced by cultural factors. This conditioning manifests itself in strange but interesting ways. Mushrooms, which are considered a delicacy in the west, are avoided by many vegetarians in India because they are supposed to resemble meat in texture and taste. Similarly, the Jain vegetarians have an initial aversion to tomatoes and beetroot because their colour resembles that of blood.

### **22.7.1 Purity and Pollution in India**

An interesting illustration of the manner in which culture influences and conditions behaviour is provided by an aspect of the caste system which is known as ritual purity and pollution.

Pollution is supposed to be brought about by birth, unclean occupation and contact with death and bodily emissions such as blood, excreta, urine, saliva, nail pairings and hair. Any contact with these things renders a person impure. Pollution is believed to be transferable by physical contact. A more interesting aspect of ritual defilement is known as distance pollution, which is particularly prevalent in South India. It is believed that pollution or impurity can be transmitted by the mere shadow of an untouchable, or by his or her proximity within a certain distance.

In Tamil Nadu and Kerala, certain castes in earlier time had to keep a certain distance between themselves on the one hand and the Brahmins and other higher castes, on the other so as not to defile the latter. Thus, the Shanar, of the toddy-tapper caste of Tamil Nadu, contaminates a Brahmin if he approached him within 24 paces. In Kerala, a Nayar may approach a Brahmin but must not touch him. A Tiyan was allowed to keep himself at a distance of 36 steps from the Brahmin and a Pulayan was not permitted to approach him within 96 paces.

### **22.7.2 Cultural Relativism**

Ethnocentrism is the view that one's way of life, religion and ideals are to be preferred to others. This is a narrow, but widely held, view, and antidote to it is provided by the idea of cultural relativism. Cultural relativism refers to the view that the values, ideals and behaviour patterns of a people are not to be evaluated and judged in terms of our own values and ideas but must be understood and appreciated in their cultural context.

The idea of cultural relativism emphasises the point that we should try to transcend our own cultural conditioning and make an attempt to understand another culture the way it is understood by the individuals who participate in it. This requires a measure

of imagination, understanding and breadth of vision. It is only when we set aside our prejudices and stereotypes about a given people that we can understand them in a realistic and humane manner.

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## 22.8 CULTURAL CHANGE

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Human society is characterised, on the one hand, by the persistence and continuity of cultural forms and, on the other, by change and innovation. No society can be totally static or isolated for long periods of time. Changes in a given culture may come about from its internal dynamics, such as revolutions or upheavals, or from contact with other cultures. The coming into contact of two or more cultures generally leads to changes, in different measures, in the interacting cultures. Quite often, cultural traits and patterns spread from the important centres of civilisation to the smaller regions. Since the dawn of civilisation in ancient Mesopotamia during the 4th millennium B.C. to the present, the process of cultural borrowing has been going on in all parts of the world.

### 22.8.1 Acculturation and Diffusion

When groups of individuals, having different cultural traditions, come into contact, changes take place in their original cultural patterns. This is referred to as acculturation or culture contact. Diffusion on the other hand, refers to the spread of cultural traits and patterns from major centres of civilisation to smaller cultures and occasionally the other way round. Acculturation and diffusion involve one another.

Diffusion generally refers to the spread of specific cultural traits or elements, whereas acculturation refers to the changes brought about in whole cultures.

The processes of acculturation and diffusion have been going on in human society since very ancient times. Thus as far back as the third millennium B.C. we find trade and cultural relations between the Mesopotamian civilisation and the Indus civilisation.

An interesting illustration of the diffusion of cultural traits is provided by the mathematical symbol of zero. The zero can increase the value of symbol one to ten, hundred, thousand and million. The zero was invented, along with the system of numerals, for the first time in India. This system of numerals was adopted by the Arabs during the 5th century. Earlier, in Arabic writing only letters were used in place of numbers. The Arabs, in turn, transmitted the Indian system of numerals to Europe. Interestingly enough, in English the system of writing numerals is still referred to as Arabic numerals whereas in Arabic it is described as Indian numerals.

### 22.8.2 Diffusion of Paper Making

Paper was invented in china during the beginning of the first century A.D. In A.D. 751, the Chinese attacked Samarkand which was under the control of Muslims. The Arabs repulsed the attack and a number of Chinese were held by them as prisoners of war. The Arabs were aware of the fact that the Chinese knew the technique of paper making. They told the Chinese prisoners that they could secure their release if they taught the Arabs how to make paper. The Chinese prisoners agreed to the condition and taught the technique of paper making to the Arabs.

Within two centuries paper mills were set up in Baghdad and Cairo. Paper making spread through the Muslim world from Samarkand and reached Europe in 1189. In

the course of time, it spread from Muslim Spain to Italy, France, Germany, England and the U.S.A. The following figure brings out the diffusion of paper making from China through the Muslim world to the West.



The Spread of Paper Making

### 22.8.3 Story of the Alphabet

Writing originated in ancient Mesopotamia during the third millennium B.C. Systems of writing are divided into two main categories, non-alphabetical and alphabetical. The Mesopotamian system of writing, known as cuneiform or wedge-shaped, was non-alphabetical. The first alphabetical system of writing emerged during the 18th century B.C. in Syria and Palestine. It is known as the North Semitic script. It was written from right to left, and it had 22 characters.

During the 9th century B.C., the Greeks borrowed the North Semitic alphabet from the Phoenicians. They improved the system. The Greek alphabet is the mother of all modern European alphabets, including English. The word alphabet comprises the first two letters of the Greek alphabet, namely, alpha and beta, which in turn were derived from the first two letters of the Semitic alphabet, namely Aleph and Beth.

The following chart brings out the evolution of the English alphabet from the 18th century B.C. to the present.

North Semitic				Greek			Etruscan		Latin			Modern caps			
EARLY	EARL CANA RITE	CANA RITE	PHOEN ICIAN	EARLY	EAST	WEST	CLASS ICAL	EARLY	CLASS ICAL	EARLY	MONUME NTAL	CLASS ICAL	BLACK LETTER	ITALIC	ROMAN
K	F	K	F	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ	A	A	A	Λ	A	A	A	A
9	9	9	9	B	B	B	B	B			B	B	B	B	B
7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	>		<	C	C	C	C
∇	∇	∇	∇	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ	∇			∇	D	D	D	D

Evolution of English Alphabet

### 22.8.4 Diffusion and Language

A comparative study of languages provides an interesting illustration of the dimensions of cultural diffusion. The English language has borrowed and adopted hundreds of words from Chinese, Indian, Semitic, African and other languages of the world in the course of its development. Consider, for example, the following words which are widely used in English but which are of Indian origin: bungalow, chit, loot, jungle, bamboo, bandicoot, verandah. The following words are of Arabic origin: sofa,

cotton, tamarind, algebra, admiral, cipher, tariff, alcohol, atlas, arrack. English has contributed a large body of vocabulary related to technology, industry and mechanics.

Another interesting illustration of cross-cultural diffusion is provided by the manner in which certain words are borrowed and modified in different languages. The following chart provides the origin of some English words.

English	Arabic	Sanskrit
Sandal (wood)	Sandal	Chandan
Ginger	Zanjabil	Shrangaver
Camphor	Kafur	Karpur (which in turn was driven from the Chinese)

**Check Your Progress 2**

**Note:** a) Use the space below for your answers.

b) Check your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

1) Show how the concepts of cultural diversity and cultural conditioning broaden our understanding of human behaviour. Use about ten lines.

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2) Fill in the blank in the given space.

i) Cultural variations exist not only world-wide but within the same ..... also.

iii) In the South of India, the Vaishnavas are divided into ..... and .....

**22.9 LET US SUM UP**

- 1) Culture and environment are closely inter-related. The environment may be seen as an independent or a dependent variable in different situations.
- 2) There is a close relationship between society and culture. A society may exist at the sub-human level, but only human society possesses culture. Thus, what differentiates human beings from other animals is culture.
- 3) Language reflects the culture of a people; it also influences and conditions their perception and thinking.

- 4) Though culture constitutes a unity, it can be analytically separated into its constituent elements, such as patterns, traits, symbols, and ethos.
- 5) Communities and groups of mankind in all parts of the world are characterised by tremendous variations not only in respect of physical and racial features, but also in regard to religious beliefs and practices, customs and traditions, rituals and ceremonies.
- 6) The cultural differences among groups of mankind persist and are passed on from one generation to another through training and education.
- 7) No culture can remain static or totally isolated for long periods of time. Cultural traits, inventions and innovations often spread from the major centres of civilisations and find their way, often in modified forms, into other cultures.

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## 21.10 KEY WORDS

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<b>Acculturation</b>	: The coming into contact of two cultures, as result of which one is influenced by the other.
<b>Cultural Area</b>	: The area in which similar cultural traits are found.
<b>Cultural Complex</b>	: An aggregate or collection of cultural traits.
<b>Cultural Conditioning</b>	: The process whereby the thought and behaviour of individuals in a given society are influenced by its culture.
<b>Cultural Ethos</b>	: The world-view of a people.
<b>Cultural Relativism</b>	: The view that the values and ideals of a culture are to be judged in their own terms.
<b>Cultural Symbols</b>	: Objects and things which are endowed with a special meaning or significance by people.
<b>Cultural Trait</b>	: The smallest identifiable unit of a culture.
<b>Cultural Universals</b>	: Institutions and cultural patterns which are universally found in all human regions.
<b>Ritual Pollution</b>	: The belief that contact with unclean occupations, untouchable persons, death and bodily emissions renders a person impure.
<b>Transhumance</b>	: The regular movement of pastoral nomads with their livestock in search of fresh pasturage.
<b>Tundra</b>	: A treeless plain, comprising black mucky soil and a dense growth of dwarf herbs.

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## 22.11 FURTHER READINGS

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## 22.12 MODEL ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Culture and environment are closely related. Human communities and groups adapt themselves to their environment in a variety of ingenious ways. Environmental conditions facilitate, as well as block, the fulfilment of human potentialities in different situations. A harsh environment, such as the Arctic or desert regions, creates greater problems of adjustment, especially when the economic and technological resources of a people are limited.

A community or group may relate differently to the same milieu at different times. In the same way, different groups in the same environment may adapt themselves to their habitat in different ways.

- 2) i) Yes. (See Section 22.4)  
ii) No. (See Section 22.5.2)  
iii) No. (See Section 22.5.6)

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) The concept of cultural diversity makes us aware of the tremendous differences which exist among groups of mankind in respect of languages, religious beliefs and practices, customs and traditions. It also makes us aware of the diverse ways in which human beings adapt themselves to the environment, and the different ways in which their basic needs are satisfied.

The concept of cultural conditioning, on the other hand, brings to our awareness the fact that the differences among groups of mankind in respect of values, ideas and behaviour are neither biologically given, nor are they genetically transmitted from parents to children.

Human beings think, feel and behave in certain ways because they have been brought up in a given social and cultural milieu. These distinct ways of thinking and behaviour are acquired by individuals through the cultural process.

- 2) i) Country  
ii) Madhavas, Shri Vaishnavas.