

# Ideology And Culture: A Conceptual Interconnection

Dr. Shweta Shukla\*

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## Abstract-

The concept of culture is inextricably linked to instinct theories in biology. Both notions serve an ideological purpose in preserving conventional Christian-Cartesian beliefs on human uniqueness. L. H. Morgan diverged from the Boasians in that he argued against "instinct" and refused to utilise the term of culture. The Boasians utilised the concept of culture as an ideological tool to denigrate the Morganian Washington school and establish themselves as a separate discipline in American institutions. The present paper attempts an interconnection between culture and ideology in different theoretical frameworks.

**Keywords:-** culture, values, ideas, ideology.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Ideology as a term owes a French origin as it originated mainly through the works of the French intellectuals. Though directly a product of the French enlightenment it has its root in the general philosophical questions about the meaning and direction with which the breakdown of the medieval world view confronted the European intellectuals. (McLellan: 1998). The intellectual thinkers like Francis Bacon and Thomas Hobbes are held as the original discussants of ideology. The Baconian theory of idols strongly influenced the English empirical tradition of Hobbes and Locke as well as the French enlightenment which eventually produced the concept of ideology.(McLellan: 1998).

The intellectual influences paved way for the emergence of the term in the aftermath of the French revolution of 1789 mainly through the works of Antoine Destutt de Tracy. Through his '*Elements d' Ideologie*', de Tracy explained ideology as 'science of ideas', (*idea-logy*). de Tracy rejected the concept of innate ideas and argued that all our ideas are based on physical sensations which Accounts for the rational investigation of the origin of ideas thereby free from religious or metaphysical prejudice. In this regard, he is thus said to have a positive and progressive notion of ideology.

However, the term is said to have a German origin also which stemmed mainly through the works of Hegel and further popularized by Karl Marx for whom not all ideas are ideology rather only those associated with classes and class struggles. For Marx, ideologies are distortion of reality that reflects the interests of the ruling class. His conceptualization of ideology comprises two main elements (McLellan: 1998):-

1. connection of ideology with idealism.
2. its connection with the uneven distribution of resources and power in the society.

In this manner, the term ideology right from its origin got popularize into the two main lines of thought:-

- ❖ The French rationalist tradition of Antoine de Tracy which emphasizes on the consensual nature of society; proposed a positive and progressive view of society.
- ❖ The German tradition of Hegel and Marx which considers society as changing entities driven with conflicts rather than consensus.

Marx's approach to ideology paved way for the development of the two opposing traditions on the concept of ideology- the Marxists and the non-Marxists. The binding thread in the Marxists line of thinking of Lenin, Luckas, Gramsci, Habermas etc. was their connection of ideology with false consciousness.(McLellan: 1998). The non-Marxist tradition popularized mainly through Karl Mannheim's '*Ideology and Utopia*'. The theory of ideology outlined by Mannheim defines ideology as a "set of ideas which conceals the present by attempting to comprehend it in terms of the past." (Ritzer, G :). Ideology for him has no moral or denunciatory intent and unlike the Marxists he opines that the ideologies are simply the product of social classes (ruling class), but can emanate from any or all sectors of the social world. Ideologies, as he explains, are inevitable as ideas emerge from specific and circumscribed areas of the social world.

In todays global era, ideology as an important subject of Sociological analysis generates the need for understanding of ideology in context to globalization. The above mentioned review on the analysis of ideology highlights that Culture is often equated with or considered different from ideology. However on a wider scale it

can be visualized that culture forms an important part of ideology. Even Marx in his famous work *The German Ideology* (1845) while discussing about the ideological forms considers culture as an important superstructural form. Althusser (), in his analysis of state apparatuses mentions culture as the realm of Ideology.

Culture, therefore forms an important and significant aspect of ideology. In many Marxists as well as the non- Marxists writings culture is visualized as a form of ideology. The present study therefore refines it endeavour and shifts the focus on the analysis of culture as an aspect of ideology.

Originating from a Latin word *cultura* meaning 'cultivation', the term culture appeared first in its current sense in Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries, to connote a process of cultivation or improvement, as in agriculture or horticulture. During the nineteenth century the term culture was initially used for the betterment or refinement of the individual, especially via education. Later on the term was used for the fulfillment of national aspirations or ideals.

Culture is the way of life of a social group, the group's total man made environment including all the material and nonmaterial products of group life that are transmitted from one generation to the next. The classic definition of culture from which more sociological definitions have followed was stated by Edward B Tylor (1871). Kroeber () opines that the consensus of most social scientists is that culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional ideas and especially their attached values. Some sociologists exclude material objects from their definition of culture. They include technical knowledge about the artifacts.

The classical Sociologists like Marx, Weber, and Durkheim dealt with the concept of culture while studying the various economic, political or social aspects of the society at large. However, the in depth and detailed study of culture was initiated by the pioneer English Anthropologist Edward B. Tylor through his book, *Primitive Culture*, published in 1871. Tylor (1871) explained culture as the complex whole, which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. For him culture is a social heritage; a gift of society to an individual. Taking into account Tylor's definition of culture Malinowski attempted an understanding of the concept. For him social heritage may be said to consist of a material part and a non- material, intangible, imponderable part. He summarized culture as the total way of life which includes all the mental, social and physical means which make life run its course. In this context culture can be taken as an organized system of purposeful activities. Thus in contrast to Tylor who emphasized more on complexity, Malinowski's focused on the holist view of culture which states that culture stands for a total way of life which secures for an individual the satisfaction of his bio- psychic drives and fulfillment of other wants and cravings and, ultimately, invest him with freedom.

Like Malinowski, Radcliffe- Brown also took the instrumental, humanistic view of culture. He regards culture as cultivation, the process of handing down and acquiring traditions, as a result of which society is perpetuated.

Bidney(1952), through his book '*Theoretical Anthropology*'(1952) elucidates culture as the product of agrofacts (products of cultivation), artifacts (products of industry), sociofacts (social organization), mentifacts (language, religion, art and so on)

On reviewing the concept of culture Majumdar and Madan (1991), stated that the view of culture as expressed by the above Anthropologists may be said to have emerged from the belief that culture is a substantive reality. This can be held as a sensate view of culture.

In his famous work '*Man in Primitive World*' (1958), E.A. Hoebel delineates culture as the sum total of integrated behavior pattern. For him culture is determined not by heredity instead is the outcome of social inventions. He argues that the cultural traits are transferred from one generation to the other via process of socialization and exchange of ideas.

Leslie White in his paper entitled '*Culturological is Psychological Interpretations of Human Behavior*' (1947), contextualizing culture emphasized upon the symbolic view of culture and claimed that culture is symbolic, continuous, cumulative and a progressive process. Emphasizing upon the symbolic view of culture Robert Redfield explicates culture as an organized body of conventional understandings manifest in art and artifacts, persisting through tradition and thereby characterizing the human society. He therefore, defines culture as a sum total of conventional meaning embodied in artifacts, social structure and symbols.

Ruth Benedict (1936) from a formalistic, aesthetic viewpoint asserts that culture like an individual is more or less consistent pattern of thought and action.

At this juncture, it can therefore be argued that though adhering to different focal points most of the modern Anthropologists adopted the functional mode of culture. Culture thus, became a broad subject of study for many anthropologists (Herskovits (1956); Linton (1945); R.H. Lowie (1920)). Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) through their paper entitled '*Culture: A Critical Review of concepts and Definitions*' indicate the existence of 108 different meanings of the term culture. The concept of culture revolves in the human society on its belief, art, morals, custom and other capabilities such as values, norms, traditions, mores, folkways,

language, race, ethnicity, technology, fads, and laws. These social variables provide the unique definition of culture for the understanding and adjustment of life in a given societal condition. The anthropological analysis therefore contrasts culture with the biological. The term is used as a collective noun for the symbolic and learned, non-biological aspects of human society, which include language, custom and convention, by which human behavior can be distinguished from that of other primates.

As an endeavor to put forth a comprehensive understanding of the concept of culture, Beals and Hoijer (1955), on the basis of the existing anthropological view exert that the concept can be applied in the following ways:

- the ways of life common to all mankind
- the ways of living and patterns of behavior peculiar to a given society

On the basis of the above mentioned anthropological explanation of culture we can put forth following as the main characteristics of Culture (Upadhyay V.S. & Pandey Gaya):

1. Culture is man- made.
2. Culture is learned.
3. Culture is transmitted.
4. Every society has its own culture.
5. Culture is social; not individualistic.
6. Culture is ideal for the group.
7. Culture satisfies human need.
8. Culture has adaptability.
9. Culture has integrative quality.
10. Culture shapes human personality.
11. Culture is both super individual and super organic.

In this context, it can therefore be argued Culture thus forms the behavior patterns necessary for living in the human society, i.e., it determines the accepted ways of behaving in the society. Ralph Linton (1945) states that, "the culture of a society is the way of life of its members; the collection of ideas and habits which they learn, share and transmit from generation to generation." Culture to a large extent determines how the members of a society think and feel, thereby directing and defining their actions and outlook towards life.

Keeping in mind the attributes of culture Ogburn(1950), differentiated between the material and non-material form of culture. Where material Culture includes all kinds of usable commodities the non- material refers to all sorts of values, ideologies, norms, ideas, art and patterns of behaviour and relationship.

Ogburn opines that under any process of change there is a gap between the material and non- material culture. Generally the material culture changes at a greater speed than the non-material culture. He calls it as the process of cultural lag .In this context Sociologists (Srinivas:1972 , Dube: , Singh:1986 ) have explained the cultural changes or mobility in terms of various processes like acculturation, westernization, modernization, sanskritization, and globalization in today's times. It is claimed that in the globalization phase the pace of change in the material and non- material form of culture if not same is very close and therefore in the present study the distinction between the material and non- material culture is not held so significant rather the focus is on the Cultural Principles.

The extensive review of culture helps in deriving that culture is heavily informed by tradition and the traditional values of any society infact it is an important and a very significant element of tradition. Tradition, a type of folkways can be defined as a norm influencing both the structure and value system in the society. It is basically the feature of a society that continues for a longer period of time and is handed over from generation to generation, e.g. caste, kinship, hierarchy are the tradition of Indian society. It is an abstract identity, a kind ethos of that accords a distinct identity to any society. Tradition qualifies both structure as well as culture, i.e., it is both a structural as well as a cultural feature and influences every aspect of structural as well as cultural features. Tradition can thus be applied to any kind of value, structure, system, ideology or any culture.

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