



## CULTURE AND CULTURAL STUDIES: A VIEW

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**Abstract:** *This article deals with the basic concepts of culture and cultural studies. It focuses on how cultural studies has become a separate discipline in the second half of the twentieth century. and also it studies the relationship of cultural studies with other disciplines like anthropology and sociology and literature. This articles deals the definition of cultural studies and some other concepts like globalization and glocalization, circuit of culture etc.*

**Key words:** *Culture , Cultural Studies , Globalization, Glocalization.*

There is a huge difference between the study of culture and institutionally located cultural studies. The study of culture has taken place in a variety of academic disciplines – sociology, anthropology, English literature, etc. –and in a range of geographical and institutional spaces. However, this is to be understood as cultural studies. The study of culture has no origins , and to locate one is to exclude other possible starting points. Nevertheless this does not mean that cultural studies cannot be named and its key concepts identified.

Cultural studies is a discursive formation, that is , a cluster of ideas, images, and practices, which provide ways of talking about, forms of knowledge and conduct associated with, a particular topic , social activity or institutional site in society. Cultural studies is constituted by a regulated way of speaking about objects and coheres around key concepts , ideas and concerns. Further, cultural studies had a moment at which named itself, even though that

naming marks only a cut or snapshot of an ever –evolving intellectual project.

The word ‘culture’ is derived from the Latin words ‘cultura’ and ‘cultus’ which mean “to cultivate” in middle English period. In the course of time it has changed its meanings ‘to honour’ and ‘to protect’. By the nineteenth century in Europe it meant the habits customs, and tastes of the upper classes also known as the elite. In the present context of culture studies, the word culture is the mode of generating meaning and ideas. This mode is a negotiation over which meanings are valid. Meanings are governed by power relations. Elite culture controls meanings because it controls the terms of the debate. Non- elite views on life and art are rejected as tasteless , useless or even stupid by the elite. What this implies is that certain components of culture get more visibility and significance .

Cultural studies finds its origin in the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (BCCCS) UK and in the works of Raymond



Williams, Richard Hoggart and later by Stuart Hall, Tony Bennett and others. Cultural studies is a discipline between discipline. Cultural studies is interested in the process by which power relations between and within groups of human beings organise cultural artefacts (such as food habits , music, cinema, sports events and celebrity culture) and their meanings.

The growth of cultural studies is linked to the rise in interest in popular culture in western societies in the 1960s. More leisure time, widespread television viewing , music and other cultural states especially among the youth , brought popular culture to the forefront of critical scrutiny.

Stuart Hall's work has been a trendsetter in cultural studies and inaugurated the field in Britain. Hall's essay, 'Encoding/ Decoding' (1973) set the scene for cultural studies of the media. The essay argued that meanings within texts – songs, paintings, television soaps – are organised through the operation of certain 'codes'. Hall argues that the apparatuses, relations and practices of production appear as symbolic vehicles within language. Hall argues that a society or culture tends to impose its classifications of the social and cultural world, which constitute a dominant cultural order.

'Cultural studies' studies the language in and through which meanings are made in a particular culture; it questions how such meanings reflect the power struggles within that culture; it explores how certain meanings are privileged in that culture at the cost of others. So, Culture Studies is the analysis of a culture's systems of meaning, production and consumption.

### **The 'Circuit of Culture'**

**Paul du Gay** talks of five basic elements of culture. These elements are

- Representation
- Identity
- Production
- Consumption
- Regulation

These elements present a process through which every cultural artefact, object or event must pass.

The cultural studies today adopts certain key areas and methods to understand the modes of meaning-production. These are:

- Language, discourse
- Identity
- Everyday life
- Ethnography
- Media studies
- Reception/ audience studies
- Cultural intermediaries

Raymond Williams' influential definition of culture and society remains the cornerstone for much cultural studies even today:

"Our description of our experience comes to compose a network of relationships, and all our communication systems, including the arts , are literally parts of our social organization... since our way of seeing is literally our way of living , the process of communication is in fact the process of community : the offering , reception and comparison of new meanings, leading to the tensions an achievements of growth and change."

So, experience is the central to the project of cultural studies. Experience is a central political and analytical category itself. The following are the set of explanations about language and cultural studies.

- Studying society is about culture, and not only about economics or politics.



- Meanings and values, and their exchange or circulation, constitute a particular culture or community : communication creates community.
- A society's meanings and values reflect its economic and political systems- and hence to study meanings is to study a culture.

Cultural Studies is about the role of meanings in any society. A culture is the sharing of meaning.

Meanings are never fixed: they are arrived at through a process of negotiation and exchange.

Cultural studies analyses the processes through which certain meanings are produced in a particular culture. It believes that the processes of meanings- production are connected to the structures of power in society: certain meanings acquire greater power because of their sources, other meanings become less important.

According to post structuralism, there is no essential meaning, and all meanings is the result of this relationship with its opposite of other. For Cultural studies this insight is crucial. It suggests:

- All meaning is relational
- All representation is based on difference.
- All representation is a system of negotiation where meanings, contest for visibility and expression .

Texts and representations are therefore texts in contexts, in society. So, culture studies is basically an exploration of specific contexts (culture, community, nation, caste, class, gender, race, sexuality) where representations produce and reinforce identities through particular modes.

### **Post Colonialism and Cultural Studies**

Globalization has a sustained engagement with and influence on local

cultures. Some critics have argued that there is a need to look at the role of globalization through the postcolonial lens. Since post colonial studies is concerned the oppression of the non-European races by European ones, cultural studies in a globalized age also needs to be conscious of the racialized nature of globalised/ globalising culture.

Simon During a noted cultural theorist, outlines a set of reasons for connecting post colonialism with globalization studies(2000).

- i. All culture now is linked with the supply of money.
- ii. All cultures now have transnational subsidiaries, opponents or collaborations.
- iii. Cultures are no more territorial and hence do not cohere or fuse into wholes or traditions.

So, cultures and traditions are modified not with the local in mind but with global patterns. Their choices are determined by the global economy.

Local cultures are linked to global economies, markets and needs, and hence any study of contemporary culture has to examine the role of a non -local market/ money- which requires a postcolonial awareness of the role of racial differences, the colonial relationship between First world and third world and the exploitative relationship between the two worlds even today.

Contemporary globalization is also a mode of cultural exchange, appropriation and marketing. contemporary cultural studies therefore examines the role of globalizing finances and markets in the formation of cultures. Shared economies in globalization influence cultural modes, and this is what cultural studies is interested in.



### **Globalization**

Globalization is a term frequently used with an astonishing lack of specificity. It has been used to refer to everything from worker migration to global warming, from Microsoft's presence in every PC in the third world to fundamentalism. The essential features of globalization are:

- i. The expansion of trade in terms of trading relationship and movement of capital.
- ii. The development of transnational and global communication networks.
- iii. The diminished role of the nation state even within its territorial space.
- iv. The rise of transnational cultural, economic, political networks (such as the IMF, Greenpeace and Amnesty).
- v. The increased presence of western consumer products and cultural artefacts (from Levi's to Microsoft), a McDonaldization of the world.

**Glocalization:** Ronald Robertson defines glocalization as 'the creation and incorporation of locality, processes which themselves largely shape, in turn, the compression of the world as a whole.'

Resistance to globalization is local. An interesting variant of such a process is the way in which metropolitan-based cultural artefacts affect folk and local traditions in India. The spread of mass-mediated music genres, especially film music, has significantly effected the decline and even extinction of folk genres in India.

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