

An abstract graphic consisting of vibrant, overlapping brushstrokes in shades of red, blue, green, and yellow, set against a light yellow background. The strokes are dynamic and expressive, flowing from the upper right towards the lower left.

Introduction to  
**CULTURE STUDIES**

**Rumina Rai**  
**Kishwar Panna**

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# Introduction to Culture Studies

(As per BMM Syllabus of Mumbai University)

## **Prof. Rumina Rai**

*M.A.*

*Full-time Faculty and Lecturer,  
Bachelor of Mass Media (BMM),  
R.D. & S.H. National College & S.W.A. Science College  
Bandra (W), Mumbai- 400 050.*

## **Prof. Kishwar Panna**

*M.A.*

*Ex-Lecturer, Sociology Department,  
Maharashtra College of Arts, Science & Commerce,  
Mumbai Central - 400 008.*

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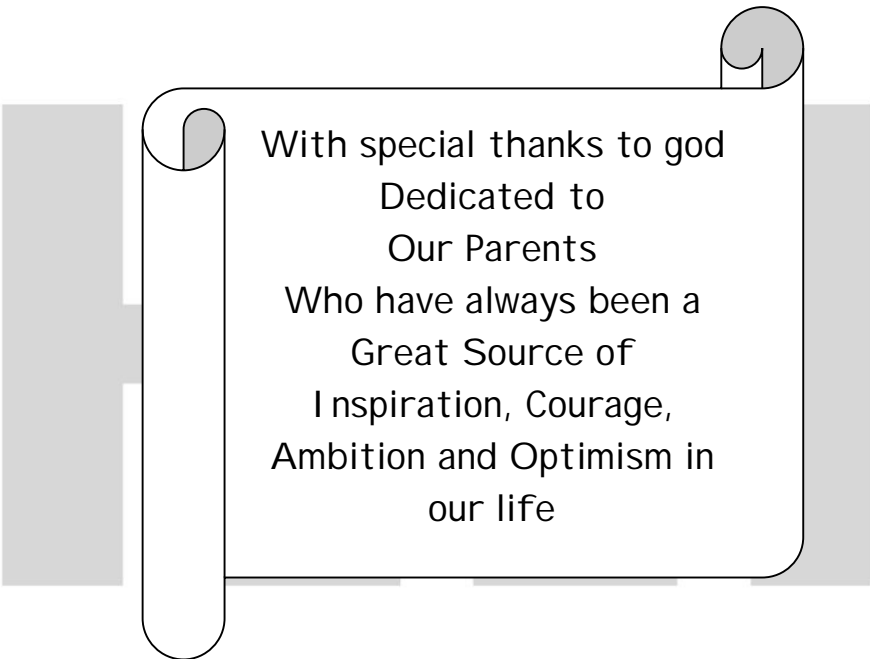
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With special thanks to god  
Dedicated to  
Our Parents  
Who have always been a  
Great Source of  
Inspiration, Courage,  
Ambition and Optimism in  
our life

## PREFACE

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This book on Culture Studies has been revised according to the new syllabus prescribed by the University of Mumbai for the Bachelor of Mass Media. The necessary changes have been made accordingly. All the chapters have been written keeping in mind the standard of the students of S.Y. BMM. The language used is simple and within the grasp of the students. Examples given are mostly of Indian context and fully support National Integration.

We are very pleased to present this book of Culture Studies to the students of S.Y. BMM.

We take this opportunity to acknowledge the valuable support of our family members, friends and students, without which it would not have been possible to write and complete this book so effectively. A big Thank You to Aryaveer, Rihaana Fatema and Zuheir Patel for their love and co-operation always.

A special Thank You to Dr. Naren Israney for all his help, valuable advice and unstinted support, we shall always remain very grateful to him.

**– Rumina Rai and Kishwar Panna**

## SYLLABUS

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### INTRODUCTION TO CULTURE STUDIES

#### Objectives

1. To create awareness of cultural theories and its relevance in media
2. To discuss the importance of cultural studies and its role in mass media.
3. To understand the cultural concepts and its impact on the media.

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## Chapter 1

# Introduction to Cultural Studies

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### (A) Evolution, Need and Significance of Cultural Studies

#### ● Evolution of Culture Studies

During the 1950s and 1960s, interest in cultural theories of mass communication began to develop and take hold. **Limited effects theory** focuses on whether media content can have an immediate and direct effect on specific thoughts and actions of individuals. However, it is possible to approach the study of mass media in another way. Instead of focusing on specific effects on individuals, we can focus on changes in culture, on how shared understandings and social norms change. Instead of trying to locate hundreds of small effects and adding them all, we can enquire whether the development of mass media have had any profound implications in the manner we create, share, learn and apply culture.

These new perspectives argued that media might have the power to intrude into and alter how we make sense of ourselves and our social world. These theories are quite diverse and offer very different answers to questions about the role of media in social life. Nonetheless, the concept of **culture** is central in all these theories. Media affects society because these affect how culture is created, shared, learnt and applied. Cultural theories offer a broad range of interesting ideas about how media can affect culture and also provide many different views concerning the long-term consequences of the cultural changes effected by media.

There are microscopic, interpretive theories which focus on how individuals and social groups use media to create and foster new forms of culture that structure everyday life. These theories are referred to as **cultural studies theories**.

There are macroscopic, structural theories which focus on how social elites use their economic power to gain control over and exploit media institutions. These theories argue that elites effectively use media to propagate hegemonic culture as a means of maintaining their

dominant position in the social order. These are called *political economy theories* because they place priority on how economic power provides a basis for ideological and political power.

Cultural studies are less concerned about the long-term consequences of media for social order but are more concerned about looking at how media affect our individual life. These theories are said to be micro level or microscopic because they emphasize larger issues about the social order in favour of questions involving the everyday life of average people. Critical theories and political theories in contrast are macroscopic cultural theories, which are less concerned about developing detailed explanation of how individuals are influenced by media but are rather more concerned about how the social order as a whole is affected. Ideally, both these theories ought to be complementary. Yet until recently, macroscopic and microscopic cultural theories developed in relative isolation. Theorists were separated by differences in geography, politics and research objectives.

### **Rise of Cultural Theories in Europe**

European social research has been characterized by grand social theories – highly ambitious, macroscopic and speculative theories which attempt to understand and predict important trends in culture and society.

Ironically, in the 1970s and 1980s, at the very time when Marxism failed as a practical guide for politics and economics in Eastern Europe, yet grand social theories based on Marxist thought were gaining increasing acceptance in Western Europe.

### **Marxist Theory**

Marx developed his theory in the latter part of the 19th century during one of the most volatile periods of social changes in Europe. He identified industrialization and urbanization as problems but argued that these changes were not bad. Instead he blamed ruthless capitalists for creating social problems because they maximized personal profits by exploiting workers. Marx was an utopian, calling for the creation of an entirely new social order in which all social classes would be abolished. The workers would rise against capitalists and demand an end to exploitation. They would band together to create an egalitarian, democratic social order. Marx argued that the hierarchical class system was at the root of all social problems and must be ended by a revolution of the workers or proletariats. He believed that elites dominated society through their direct control over the means of production (labour, factories, land) – referred to as base of society.

However, elites also maintained themselves through their control over culture or superstructure of society (ideology).

Marx concluded that the only hope for social change was a revolution in which the masses seized control of the base – the means of production. Control over the superstructure (ideology) would naturally follow. He saw little possibility that reforms in the superstructure could lead to social evolution. (Elites would never willingly surrender power. Power must be taken from them.)

### **Neo-Marxism**

Most British cultural studies theories can be labelled as Neo-Marxist. The importance which the Neo-Marxists attach to the superstructure has created a fundamental division within Marxism. They assure that change can surely begin with peaceful, ideological reform rather than by violent revolution in which the working class seizes control of the means of production. Some call for radical transformation of the superstructure, while others call for modest reforms.

### **Textual Analysis and Literary Criticism**

Modern European cultural studies theories have a second, very different source – a tradition of humanist criticism of religious and literary texts which is referred to as *hermeneutics*. The common objective was to identify those texts that had greatest cultural value and to interpret them so that their value would be understood and appreciated by others. Texts were seen as a civilizing force in the society. Hermeneutics was used to enhance this force. The Humanist focused on working to identify, what came to be known as the “*literary canon*” – a body of great literature. The literary canon was part of what was referred to as high culture, a set of cultural artefacts – music, art, literature and poetry – which the Humanists judged to have the highest value. By identifying and explaining these important texts, the Humanists attempted to make these texts easily accessible to more people, preserve and gradually raise the level of culture – to enable even more people to become humane and civilized.

### **The Frankfurt School**

The early prominent school of Neo-Marxist theory developed during the 1930s at the University of Frankfurt and became known as the **Frankfurt School**. Two most famous individuals associated with the school were **Max Horkheimer** and **T. Adorno**. This school combined Marxist critical theory with hermeneutics. They viewed high culture as something which had its own integrity and inherent value, and therefore could not be used by elites to enhance their personal power. Horkheimer and Adorno were skeptical whether high culture could be communicated through mass media. Adorno claimed that mass media

reproductions of high culture were inferior. The Frankfurt School has been criticized for being too elitist and paternalistic.

### **Development of Neo-Marxist Theory in Britain**

During the 1960s and 1970s, two important schools of Neo-Marxist theory emerged in Great Britain: **British Cultural Studies and Political Economic Theory**. The British cultural studies theory has attempted to trace historic elite domination over culture to criticize the social consequences of this domination, and to demonstrate how it continued to be exercised over specific minority groups or subcultures. These studies criticize and contrast elite notions of culture, including high culture, with popular everyday forms practiced by minorities. The superiority of all forms of elite culture including high culture is challenged and compared with useful and valuable forms of popular culture.

*Graham Murdock* traced the rise of British cultural studies during the 1950s and 1960s. Another dominant early theorist was *Raymond Williams*. He questioned the importance of high culture and seriously considered the role of folk culture. Towards the end of 1960s and 1970s, Williams turned his attention to the mass media. He developed a pessimistic perspective of mass media's role in modern society. His ideas inspired a generation of young British media, first at the center for contemporary cultural studies at the University of Birmingham and then at England and Europe. Williams was broadly more concerned with the issue of cultural change and development as well as elite domination of culture. He argued that mass media posed a great threat to the cultural development. He rejected the literary canon as a standard (with notions of high culture). He was equally reluctant to embrace folk culture. He felt that if there were to be genuine progress, it would have to come through significant reform of social institutions.

The first important school of cultural studies theorists was formed at the University of Birmingham during the 1960s by **Stuart Hall**. He argued that mass media can be best understood as a pluralistic public forum (the idea that media may prove to be a place where the power of dominant elites can be easily challenged.)

The key strength and limitation of British culture theorists is their direct involvement in various radical social movements. They not only studied the social movements but they even got enlisted in the movement and sometimes even lead them. They have been active in a broad range of British social movements including feminism, youth movements, and racial and ethnic minority movement.

However, an active involvement can make *objective analysis* of movements difficult. Nonetheless, these theorists reject the possibilities of objectivity anyway and doubt its utility for social research.

In the US, the British cultural studies are influencing research by scholars in many fields.

### ● **Need for Culture Studies**

#### **Cultural Studies: Introduction**

- These studies focus on the use of media to create various forms of culture which structure everyday life.
- It was inaugurated by the University of Birmingham Center for contemporary cultural studies, which develop a variety of critical methods for the analysis, interpretation and criticism of cultural artefacts.

#### **Need for Culture Studies**

- (1) It provides tools which enable one to read and interpret one's culture critically.
- (2) It subverts the distinction between the high and low culture.
- (3) It allows critical scrutiny of culture without prior prejudices towards one or another sort of cultural text.
- (4) It establishes culture within a theory of social production and reproduction, specifying ways that cultural forms serve to further social domination or to enable people to resist and struggle against domination.
- (5) It asserts value of popular culture, empowers minority and values their culture, stressing on cultural pluralism and egalitarianism.
- (6) It specifies what ideology is operative in a given cultural artefact.
- (7) It lends itself to a multiculturalist programme.
- (8) It makes people sensitive towards relations of power and domination as encoded in cultural texts.
- (9) It shows how much media culture manipulates and indoctrinates us, thus empowering individuals to resist the dominant meaning.

#### **Components of Critical Cultural Studies**

Cultural studies contains three-fold project of analyzing:

- (a) Production and political economy of culture.
- (b) Cultural text analysis.
- (c) Audience reception of texts and their efforts.

Details of each project is as follows.

- (a) **Production and political economy:** Political economy of culture means to analyze cultural texts within their system of production and distribution.
- (b) **Textual analysis:** Products of media culture require multi-dimensional, textual readings to analyze their various forms of discourses, ideological positions, narrative strategies, construction and effects.

This is generally done through:

- (i) **Content analysis:** That is analysis of contents of communication, which involves classifying contents in such a way so as to bring out their basic structure.
- (ii) **Semiology:** Analyses how linguistic and non-linguistic cultural 'signs' form a system of meanings.
- (c) **Audience reception and use of media culture:** All texts are subject to multiple readings, depending on the perspective and subject position of the reader.

Audiences are of three types:

- Information seeking
- Reaction seeking
- Conversion seeking.

### **Key Concepts in Cultural Studies**

(a) **Representation:** Cultural studies emphasize focus on representation which refers to how the world is socially constructed and represented to us by ourself in meaningful ways. The major stress of cultural studies is on the study of culture as the signifying practice of representation. For this, we need to explore the different meanings generated by texts, and the modes by which each meaning is produced in different contexts. Moreover, representations of culture and their meanings have a material aspect. These are embedded in sounds, inscriptions, objects, images, books, magazines and programmes on television. All this is produced, enacted, used and understood in specific social contexts.

A wide range of different representations of groups or individuals can exist in texts or cultures. The concept of representation has an important place in the study of culture. Representation is that which connects meaning and language to culture. It is an important element of the process through which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture. It involves use of language, signs and images which stand for or represent things. Basically, representation is the

creation of the meanings of the concepts created in our minds through language. For example, SUV advertisements portray driving of SUVs as an exciting outdoor experience or beer advertisements which show drinking beer as the most important aspect of a party, or motorcycles being represented as a manly means of transport.

**(b) Materialism:** Cultural studies is mostly concerned with modern industrialized economies as well as with the media cultures which are organized on capitalist lines. In these, the representations are produced by profit-motivated corporations. It is in this context, that, cultural studies have developed a form of cultural materialism concerned with understanding how and why specific meanings are inscribed at the time of production.

Therefore, in addition to keeping the focus on signifying practices, cultural studies also try to connect these to political economy. In this manner, cultural studies, as a discipline is concerned with power and the distribution of economic and social resources. As a result, cultural studies is concerned with: the one who owns as well as controls cultural production; distribution mechanisms used for cultural products; and the consequences of the patterns of ownership and control of the outlines of the cultural landscape.

**(c) Non-reductionism:** A central characteristic of cultural studies is its non-reductionism. In this, each culture is viewed as having its own particular meanings, rules and practices, which cannot be reduced to or explained only in terms of some other category or level of social formation. Cultural studies has specifically fought against economic reductionism which tries to explain meanings of cultural texts with reference to its place in the production process.

The processes of political economy do not determine meanings of texts in cultural studies. Political economy, social relationships and culture are to be understood on the basis of their own specific logic and methods of development. Each one of these is 'articulated' or related to the other in context-specific manner. Non-reductionism of cultural studies emphasizes that class, gender, sexuality, race, nation, as well as ethnicity have their own specifics and they cannot be reduced to political economy or to each other.

**(d) Articulation:** It links cultural or social phenomena. The concept of articulation has been deployed by cultural studies for theorizing the relationships among various components of a social formation. It points towards the formation of temporary unity among elements which do not necessarily have to go together. Articulation refers to expressing/representing as well as 'putting together'. In this way, representations of gender can be 'put-together' with

representations of race or nations, so that we can refer to nations as being female.

Articulation is the framework of connections which can create a unity of two or more different or distinct elements, under certain conditions. This takes place in context-specific and contingent ways which cannot always be predicted. Articulation is also deployed for discussing the relation between culture and political economy. Thus, we can say that culture is 'articulated' with moments of production, but not determined in any 'necessary' way by that moment, and *vice versa*. Hence, we can look into how the moment of production is inscribed in texts and also how the 'economic' is cultural, which is a meaningful set of practices.

In cultural studies, articulation is a method used to analyze culture. It envisions and builds up new frameworks for interpretation. The metaphor of a game of Lego set can be used to understand how articulation works. It can be continually fashioned and refashioned.

**(e) Power:** Power is the capacity of imposing one's will on others. It is a common argument that media has too much power. There is startling agreement among cultural studies writers about the centrality of the concept of power. For them, power is seen as pervading at every level of social relationships.

Power is coercive force subordinating one group of people to another and the glue holding the social groups together, but it is not just these. It is also seen in terms of the processes generating and enabling any form of social action, relationship or order. In this sense, power is constraining as well as enabling. Cultural studies is specifically concerned with subordinated groups, mainly class, and then race, gender, age group, nations, etc. For example, minorities of all kinds generally presume that their way of life and views are treated by media in a positively hostile manner.

**(f) Popular culture:** Subordination takes place due to coercion, as well as consent. Cultural studies understands popular culture as the grounds on which this consent is obtained or lost.

In order to understand the interplay of power and consent, two related concepts of ideology and hegemony are often deployed in the earlier texts of cultural studies. Ideology commonly refers to maps of meanings which are presented as universal truths. Ideology is a historically specific meaning obscuring and maintaining power. For example, gender representations in advertising depicting women as housewives or sexy bodies, reduces them to such categories. Such portrayal denies them their rightful position as human beings and citizens of society. This process of making, maintaining and reproducing

ascendant meanings and practices is referred to as hegemony. It refers to a situation where powerful groups exercise social authority and leadership over subordinate groups by gaining consent.

**(g) Texts and readers:** Production of consent refers to popular identification to cultural meanings by signifying practices of hegemonic texts. Text refers to written word as well as the practices signified. Texts generally describe a range of cultural objects like books, television programmes, CDs, films, etc. It also includes generating meaning by sounds, images, objects (like clothes) and activities (like dance, sport). Images, sounds, practices and objects are systems of sign and signify in the same way as language. So, they all can be commonly referred to as texts. All sorts of texts, including television and films, are said to be read. In a broader sense, it refers to understanding the audience.

The meanings which critics find in cultural texts are not the same as that produced by readers or active audiences. All readers do not necessarily share same meanings with each other. Critics are also a specific breed of readers. Texts, as forms of representation, are polysemic by nature, containing the possibility of many different meanings which have to be realized by actual readers. These readers give life to words and images. The ways in which texts work can be easily examined, but the meanings, audiences obtain from textual analysis cannot be 'read-off'. Meaning is produced by the interplay of text and reader. As a result, the moment of consumption is also a moment of meaningful production.

**(h) Subjectivity and identity:** Identity is the sense of self and the process of definition of that sense. It is commonly argued that media plays a significant role in this process. One of the processes by which we are formed as persons, is marked by the moment of consumption. During the 1990s, main areas of concern in cultural studies were what it is to be a person, viz., subjectivity and how we describe ourselves to each other, viz., identity. Therefore, we can say that cultural studies looks into: how we come to be the kind of people we are; how we are produced as subjects; and how we identify with descriptions of ourselves as male or female, black or white, etc.

Anti-essentialism is an argument which states that identities are not things that exist; they do not have essential or universal qualities. In fact, they are discursive construction, products of discourses or regulated ways of speaking through the world. So, identities are made rather than found through representation, especially language. For instance, in relation to media, an individual may define himself/herself as a heavy metal fan or a fan of rock music.

## **(B) Theories and its Relevance in Media**

## Concept of Culture

### Introduction

In everyday life, we make use of the term 'culture'. We speak about it very often in context to 'how culture exists', 'how culture is changing' and 'what are the elements that represent our culture'. Now let us examine, what exactly is 'culture'.

Culture is all that man learns and acquires by virtue of being a member of society.

***Do animals have a culture? Is their culture similar to that of humans?***

By observing human and animal culture separately, let us answer some of these basic questions whose answers are generally taken for granted.

In the case of animals, their ***genes*** play a very important role while in the case of humans, ***learning, training and socialization*** play more important role than just genes.

Different species of ***animals can survive only on a restricted diet***. Example: Lion cannot survive on grass. ***Man can survive on a variety of food items*** and is not dependent on a restricted diet.

Animals ***have to eat in order to survive***. But humans in certain situations ***can refuse food***, for certain hours, days and months. Example: Jain monks survive only on water or even without both food and water for months.

This observation proves that man can transcend, to a certain extent, his biological needs for spiritual and religious reasons but the animals are always rooted in their organismic needs. Thus, culture intervenes in the satisfaction of biological needs.

In the case of sexual needs, ***man can deny it for religious, psychological and personal reasons***. This proves that man can control his sexual urge. Nature and culture intervenes in the satisfaction of the sexual urge. Example: Marriage through which this satisfaction is institutionalized. In addition, humans also have incest taboos. Hence, culture undeniably intervenes in the satisfaction of the sexual urges of man. However, animals ***have no taboos***.

Both, humans as well as animals adapt to the environment. However, animals have no external assets; thus, they have solely to depend totally on their ***biological organs***. However, humans have 'culture' which ***helps in adaptation to the environment***. Example: Igloos protect Eskimos. This is a cultural condition.

There is much more to the relationship between man and environment, other than just adaptation. Man not only *adapts and adjusts* to the environment, but also *changes* the environment to suit his needs and preferences. Unlike animals, human beings also have the ability to change their behaviour in response to a wide range of environmental demands. This ability in humans is known as *plasticity* which has allowed humans to survive under a wide variety of unfavourable ecological conditions.

### Definition of Culture

Culture comes from the German word — '*Kultur*' meaning '*growing*'. 'Culture' in social anthropology means "knowledge", it is the knowledge about humanity which is learnt or acquired but not inborn.

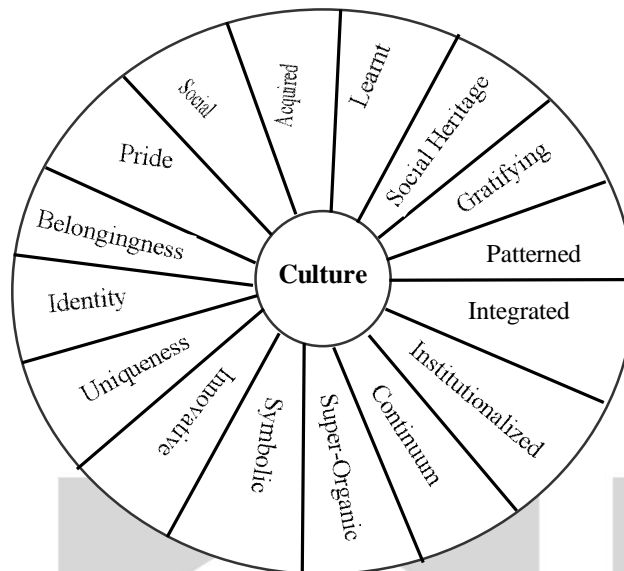
**Edward Tylor** has given one of the oldest and a classical definition of culture as, "*Culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.*"

It suggests that culture includes tools, weapons, fire, agriculture, animal domestication, metallurgy, writing, the steam engine, glasses, airplanes, computers, penicillin, nuclear power, rock-and-roll, video games, designer jeans, religion, political systems, subsistence patterns, science, sports and social organizations. For Tylor, culture includes all aspects of human activity: from the fine arts to popular entertainment, from everyday behaviour to the development of sophisticated technology. It includes plans, rules, techniques, designs and even the policies made for better living.

Some of the features of culture are as follows:

- (1) Every human group has a culture. It differs from society to society. It also has different origins, that is, it is marked by *uniqueness*.
- (2) Culture also provides each member of a group with a notion of *identity*, by telling you who you are.
- (3) Culture gives the person a sense of *belongingness* which means the person belongs to a particular group, a particular society. Example – A person may belong to a Punjabi community or a Bengali community.
- (4) Culture gives us a sense of *pride*.
- (5) Culture is *social* as it occurs in a group.
- (6) Culture is *acquired* – it is something man is not born with, but something in which a man is born into. It is something man learns by virtue of being a member of society.

- (7) Culture is *learnt* through the process of socialization.
- (8) Culture is a *social* heritage – it is a social heritage as it is transmitted by and communicated to other members of a society. When an individual is born into a society, the social symbols, artefacts, etc. of his/her culture are passed on to him/her.
- (9) Culture is *gratifying* as it satisfies the needs of its individuals. Example: Need for love and security is satisfied by the institutions of family and marriage.
- (10) Culture tends to be *patterned*. It involves repeating similar approved behaviour, so that it has a recognizable form or structure. Example: Religious practices and customs are different in different communities.
- (11) Culture tends to be *integrated*. It has consistent premises, values or goals which give it a unity. Example: If there is a festival, everyone celebrates irrespective of their caste or religion, thus culture is helpful in integrating people of different castes and religions.
- (12) Culture can be *institutionalized*, it can exist and represent itself in a set of institutions and thus enable to create a notion of order. Example: Institutions of family and marriage help people have a stable and well-defined life.
- (13) Culture is a '*continuum*', which means that cultural traditions have accumulated without any break in continuity. The structure of culture is transmitted from one generation to the next and every generation adds, subtracts or changes what it inherits. This aspect of change and continuity shows that it is a dynamic process and is not stagnant. Example: Marriage, customs and traditions.
- (14) Culture is *super-organic*, it is above society. People and societies come and go but culture continues to survive. Culture is therefore super-individual and super-organic.
- (15) Culture is *symbolic*. It has a range of symbols, which represent both: the material world (dress, food) and non-material world (values, beliefs, customs). Symbols are the conceptual devices used to communicate ideas to people. Example: Different types of flags convey different meanings to individuals. Culture is symbolic in nature; it includes the capacity to communicate through symbols. Example: In the Indian society, 'sindoor' and 'mangalsutra' worn by women symbolize that they are married.
- (16) Culture has the ability to *innovate*, that is, to create. Example: In music and computers, etc.



**Figure 1.1: Features of Culture**

### **Relation of Culture with Mass Media**

There is a very close relationship existing between culture and mass media. Both these influence each other to a great extent. On one hand, culture determines the content matter of mass media. Example: the different films and telesoaps are based upon and greatly influenced by some or the other kind of culture.

On the other hand, mass media also influences culture. It is generally believed and often asserted that the Mass Media is a very powerful means of spreading culture, determining and controlling thoughts and actions of people to a very great degree in society. Mass media is an important tool of reinforcing the existing culture and values of a particular society. Example: The latest trend amongst people, to have many ceremonies relating to marriage, this has been popularized by the media, which in turn reinforces the traditional cultural heritage.

Culture also influences people's choice of a particular kind of media. Example: The different economic and social strata of people in a society select and prefer to access different convenient forms of mass media. The lower income groups prefer audio-visual forms of media compared to the print media.

The impact and influence of persuasive mass communication is tremendous on the minds of the younger generations. No wonder then, Mass Media has radically altered the attitudes, thoughts and lifestyles of the people all over the world. There is a close connection between the Mass Media of communication and the emergence of mass culture.

Mass culture has emerged as a result of the dynamic revolutionary role played by the modern Mass Media of communications. Example: Movies, radio, television and mass circulation of magazines have extended the mass culture in our country.

There are various theoretical perspectives with respect to culture. Some of them are as follows:

- (1) Diffusionism
- (2) Cultural Materialism
- (3) Functionalism
- (4) Social Interaction
- (5) Popular and Mass Culture, Circuit of Culture
- (6) Culture and Industry

### **(1) Diffusionism**

Diffusionism is an approach which views the transformation of culture change and evolution of society. It is another school of thought which uses the comparative method to explain why different societies are at different levels in terms of their development.

Diffusionism developed in the early part of the 20th century. It maintains that societal change takes place when societies borrow cultural traits from one another. It is from one society to another that cultural knowledge relating to technology, religion, economy and art get diffused. This theory focuses on the process whereby material traits, values, ideas, institutions, cultural patterns spread from one centre of civilization to the other. It is a process of change whereby two cultures meet at a given point in time and interact with one another, as a result of which elements and traits are borrowed and these get diffused.

In the history of diffusion, there have been **two broad approaches**:

(1) One group of anthropologists called **Extreme Diffusionists** – included *Smith and Perry*. They were the British group. They believed that civilization has originated only once in human history, i.e., in Ancient Egypt. From there, all aspects of civilization, ranging from technology to religion, spread to the other parts of the world.

(2) The other group is called the *Historical Diffusionists* – included *Graebner, Schmidt and Koppers* – the German-Austrian group. They maintained that civilization originated in a literate area in Middle East – (Iraq, Persia, and Syria) and then spread to the rest of the world.

*Alfred L. Kroeber* significantly contributed to the theory of diffusionism. According to him, diffusion is a process by which cultural material spreads. The diffused cultural material contains specific elements by which diffusion can be recognized. Diffusion in some cases

is piecemeal, where only fragments of a larger system reach or are accepted by the affected culture. In such a situation, these fragments may be put into a new context in the culture entered into. These bits may diffuse more widely than the culture complexes of which they form a partial part.

Kroeber put forward the concept of “idea transmission” or “stimulus transmission”. “Idea transmission” is a mechanism of diffusion which is different from diffusion of specific culture content or form. He extends the concept of diffusion to independent inventions or growths. Kroeber said that the civilization which is receiving becomes conscious of some potentiality, which has been already realized at some other place. Then the receiving civilization achieves that potentiality in its own way and through its own materials.

The examples given by him are of porcelain making in Europe which developed due to conscious experiments performed in order to reproduce the porcelain imported from China, or of Chinese discovery of tones in their language which could possibly be due to the exposure to Buddhist-carried philology of Sanskrit. In his article *Stimulus Diffusion* (1940), he said that cultural products may be imitated by people who did not have direct contact with its originators. A broad idea is passed on from one culture to another, but the receiving culture or civilization only internalizes those pieces of the original idea which are suitable for them.

**Diffusionism Theory in Media:** This theory explains how innovations are introduced and adopted by various communities.

Developed by *E. Rogers* (1962) – He felt that role of communication was to transfer objects of technology to masses, as planned by authorities and policy makers. *Transmission takes place in 5 stages.*

- (1) **Awareness:** Awareness of innovations through mass media.
- (2) **Adoption:** Adopted by small group of innovators.
- (3) **Acceptance:** Opinion leaders learn from the already adopted and try the innovations themselves.
- (4) **Spread:** From opinion leaders to their followers.
- (5) **Change:** After most of the people have adopted innovations, group of late adopters make the change.

## (2) Cultural Materialism

This theory is associated with **Raymond Williams**. The analysis made in cultural materialism is based in critical theory, a tradition of Frankfurt School. Cultural materialism emerged as a theoretical movement in the early 1980s. Raymond Williams coined the term

Cultural Materialism to describe a theoretical blending of Marxist analysis and leftist culturalism. Williams emphasized the material significance of culture. For him, culture is a lived experience. It consists of meanings generated by ordinary men and women, the lived experiences of the participants and the texts and practices engaged in by all people as they conduct their life.

Culture is not free of the material conditions. This idea of Williams, is in contrast with the theories which tend to focus on ideas, beauty and cultural ideals and view material culture as a secondary product of economic and technological process. According to cultural materialism, culture is simply neither a reflection of economic forces and relationships, nor is it an abstract and idealistic entity. In fact, culture is made up of texts which are produced and consumed through social processes and way of life of specific groups. Therefore, culture is material. Culture is termed material as it is made solid in a variety of forms, which are the products of industrial and social processes. Therefore, television has an impact on society through the programmes shown. Moreover, in a slightly different sense, we can say that a television set is a material object, which is placed in private and public spaces. In this way, as an object, it is a part of the décor and meaning of a living room, in fact, the rest of the décor is structured around it.

This theory is also concerned with the specific historical documents which are analysed. Cultural materialists analysed the methods by which hegemonic forces in society took control over historically important texts like Shakespeare and Austen and then used them to validate or impose certain values on the cultural imaginary. The class-based analysis of traditional Marxism is extended by additional focus on the marginalized. Cultural materialists want to bring attention to the means used by contemporary power structures like the church or state in order to disseminate ideology. For doing this, the historical context of a text and its political implications are explored. Then, on the basis of deep textual analysis, the dominant hegemonic position is made note of.

For **Raymond Williams**, cultural materialism was an elaboration of the Marxist theory of historical materialism. Cultural production is material in itself like any other human activity. Culture has to be understood in its own terms as well as a part of society. The main question, on which this theory focussed was how the relationship between society and culture should be understood. For Williams, culture was a whole way of life. The arts were a part of the social organization which is radically affected by the economic change. Culture is seen as being political because the social processes addressed by political analysis are embedded in culture. Culture is seen as a whole way of life

making up human life and political analysis is the framework by which it can be understood. He put forward the idea that cultural analysis should explore and analyze the recorded culture of a place at a given time. By doing so, the 'structure of feeling' or the shared values and outlook can be reconstituted.

**Williams** has insisted that culture is understood through the representations and practices of our daily life. Moreover, this has to be done in the context of material conditions of culture and their production. This, according to Raymond Williams, is cultural materialism. *For him, culture should be explored in terms of the following constituents:*

- (i) Institutions of artistic and cultural production like artisanal or market forms
- (ii) Formations or schools, movements and factions of cultural production
- (iii) Modes of production including relations between material means of cultural production as well as the cultural forms which are made to manifest
- (iv) Identifications and forms of culture, including the specificity of cultural products, their aesthetic purpose and the particular forms which generate and express meaning
- (v) The reproduction, in time and space, of selective tradition of meanings and practices involving both social order and social change
- (vi) The organization of the 'selective tradition' in terms of a 'realized signifying system'.

This strategy can be applied to contemporary music, its associated images and practices. For instance, Rave, Rap or Hip-hop may be seen as formations of popular music which are produced within the institutions of record companies as well as advertising agencies. Mode of production of popular music will involve technical aspects like studio recording and capitalist social relations of which these are parts of. Therefore, Rave or Hip-hop are forms of music involving specific organization of sounds, words as well as images to which specific social groups form identification. In this way, specific organization of sounds and signs are analyzed as a signifying system. We can connect this with the way, for instance, Hip-hop, reproduces and changes aspects of African-American musical forms, in addition to the values of its historically developed lived culture. This is what Hip-hop would mean to young African-Americans.

### **(3) Functionalism**

Functionalism is the view that society consists of institutions which serve important purposes for people. Rather than focusing on origins

and evolution of society, the functionalists explored the relationships among different institutions and how these institutions functioned to serve society and/or individuals.

There are two divisions in functionalism:

**1. Psychological functionalism – Bronislaw Malinowski's** functionalism focused on how society functions to serve an individual's needs or interests.

**2. Structural functionalism – A.R. Radcliffe Brown** – is associated with this type of functionalism. He stressed on the structure of society, the way it was reflected in different institutions which function to perpetuate the survival of society. For him, a society's economic, political, religious and social institutions serve to integrate the society as a whole.

Both, British anthropologist B. Malinowski, and the other Cambridge educated A. Radcliffe Brown worked independently, in 1922, and brought out this initial field monograph, defining a functional approach to the study of culture.

**Malinowski's** "Argonauts of the Western Pacific" and R. Brown's "The Andaman Islanders" – are both recognized as classics. Each one of these scholars, highly individualistic, rarely in personal contact, produced in due course a quite different system of theory. They employed markedly different concepts.

**Malinowski**, a brilliantly social person, and a professor at the London School of Economics and Political Science, addressed himself boldly to intellectual circles at large, writing books on topic after topic.

He said that *every culture*, is a working whole, an "integrated unity, in which every element has a functional contribution to make". The "function" of an "institution", i.e., an organized system of activity, is the part it plays within the interrelated whole in fulfilling human purposes or "needs". In developing this need concept, he tried several schemes, but usually he distinguished three types or levels of needs, which had to be met by all cultures, hence these were termed as universal:

**Primary or biological needs:** Procreation, nutrition, defence and protection.

**Derived or instrumental needs:** Economical organization, law and education.

**Integrative or synthetic needs:** Knowledge, magic and religion, art and play.

Malinowski emphasized that cultures form working codes. He worked out a theory of human needs in relation to institution. He maintained that there are certain basic psycho-biological needs and

every society has to evolve institutions to fulfil them. Thus, behind each institution, there is the basic psychological and biological need.

**Examples:**

- (1) The institution of marriage exists in every society to fulfil the psycho-biological needs of sexuality.
- (2) Similarly, family exists in every society to fulfil the need of upbringing and training children.

Malinowski tried to apply the functionalism theory to the study of primitive people. In a sense, the functional theory when applied to people and culture, maintains that an anthropologist should never rely on information provided by others. He must collect it himself on the field. Only then can he be fully certain about their customs and beliefs. The institutions and the cultural traits of primitive people should not be seen in isolation. They form an integral part of larger systems – institution and society.

He applied this approach to institution of primitive people like magic, superstitions and beliefs.

He tried to explain the functions of magic in primitive society. On the face of it, we would dismiss magic as an irrational superstition. But according to Malinowski, we must find out the psychological and social functions that magic performs.

Social functions of magic: is that the primitive people engage in magic collectively and this participation reinforces their social and group solidarity and cohesiveness of groups.

Psychologically – Magic relieves pent up anxiety, uncertainty and tension.

**Example:** Primitive people resort to magical activities in situations of uncertainty like during hunting, fishing expeditions etc.

**Radcliffe Brown**

According to Brown, the main object of study in anthropology is the social structure and not culture. The social system comprises the sum total of all social relationships existing among individuals in a given society, who occupy social roles.

Brown knew that the basic need of every society is co-adaptation – which means mutual adjustment of individual members. A society exists and involves institutions to fulfil this basic need. He tried to explain this by reference to totemism in primitive society. Totemism is a belief in which each human is taught to have a spiritual connection or kinship with another physical being, such as animal or plant. Totemism may be seemingly irrational, it may seem to be founded on superstition but it

fulfils basic needs of society. Through totemism, man tries to establish a system of solidarity between the animal world and humans. Totemism is a means through which humans domesticate nature.

While Malinowski built system of thought around the concept of culture, Brown made the concept of society central. According to Brown, the “function” of an element of culture is “the part it plays in the social life as a whole, and therefore the contribution it makes to the maintenance of the structural continuity.”

In this sense, he sometimes spoke of culture as an adaptation system in which each element has its special functions contributing to survival of the society.

### **Limitations**

Functionalism fails to explain why societies are different or similar, which means that some societies have different institutions to meet the same need/function. This is because they were not concerned with the historical development of different institutions but instead focused on how these institutions served society and individuals.

The functionalists were also not satisfactorily able to explain social and cultural change since they viewed societies as being static and unchanging.

### **(4) Social Interaction (Symbolic Interactionism)**

Symbolic interaction was one of the first social theories to address that we use culture to learn. This theory developed during the 1920s and 1930s and it had a variety of labels until **Herbert Blumer** gave its current name in 1969.

**G.H. Mead** (1934), a University of Chicago philosopher and social activist, provided a suitable way of understanding social life.

Each of us learn to successfully play many different social roles through interaction with others. Our actions are being “conditioned” by others while simultaneously we are also affecting their actions. The goal is not to manipulate or dominate each other but rather to create and sustain a productive, social unit — a group which provides its members with certain rewards as a return for their willingness to take on specific roles. We learn social roles through interaction and through experiences in daily life situations. Over time, we internalize the rules inherent in the situations and accordingly structure our actions. Only in rare cases, do we consciously reflect on and analyze our actions. Once internalized, these roles provide us with a powerful means of optimally controlling our actions. In due course of time, our identity becomes bound up with

them — we then feel good about ourselves because we play certain roles which are respected by others.

**Mead** offered another important insight into the socialization process. Unlike animals who are conditioned to respond to certain stimuli in predetermined ways, human socialization permits more or less conscious interpretation of stimuli and also allows planned responses. And this happens because of symbols. Symbols are arbitrary, often quite abstract representations of unseen phenomenon. Use of these symbols transforms the socialization process. Mead argued that we use symbols to create our experience of consciousness (mind), our understanding of ourselves (self), and our knowledge of the larger social order (society). In other words, symbols mediate and structure our ability to perceive and interpret whatever goes on around us.

Our actions in response to symbols are mediated (or controlled) largely by those same symbols. Therefore, a person's understanding of and relation to his or her physical or objective reality is moderated by the symbolic environment — the mind, self and society that we have internalized. The messages we give to symbols define both: us and the realities that we experience. As we get socialized, culturally agreed upon messages assume control over our interactions with our environment.

Symbols are the basis of social life. First, without symbols our social relations would be limited, for we would have no dependable mechanism for perceiving others in terms of relationships. Example: Aunts and uncles, employers and teachers, etc. These symbols define for us what such relationships entail. Second, without symbols, we would not be able to coordinate our actions with others; we would be unable to make collective plans for a future date, time and place. Symbols make social life possible. Example: Books, movies, schools or hospitals. Third, even the self is a symbol, for it consists of the ideas that we have about who we are. And it is a changing symbol, for as we interact with others, we constantly adjust our views of the self based upon how we interpret the reactions of others.

**Charles Horton Cooley**, a symbolic interactionist, wondered how human infants develop a self – the ability to see themselves separate “from the outside”. Cooley saw the self as our interpretation of how others see us, the ability to contemplate our existence, to project ourselves into the past, into the future, and into various situations of life. Cooley concluded that this unique aspect of “humanness” is socially created; that is, our sense of self develops by interaction with others. He coined the term **looking-glass self** to describe the process by which the sense of self develops.

The looking-glass self has three elements:

- (i) We imagine how we appear to those around us. Example: We may think how others see us, either tall and slim or short and fat.
- (ii) We interpret others' reactions. Example: We come to conclusions about how others evaluate us. Do they like us being tall and slim or do they dislike us for being short and fat?
- (iii) We develop a self-concept. Based upon our interpretations of the reactions of others, we develop feelings and ideas about ourselves. A favourable reflection in this "social mirror" leads to a positive self-concept, whereas a negative reflection leads to a negative self-concept.

However, the development of the self does not depend on accurate evaluations. Even if we misinterpret about how others think about us, those misjudgements also become part of our self-concept. The development of the self is an ongoing and lifelong process. The above mentioned three steps of the looking-glass self are an everyday part of our life, and our ongoing monitoring of how other people react to us continually modifies the self. Thus, the self is never a finished product but is always in process.

## **(5) Popular and Mass Culture, Circuit of Culture**

### **Popular and Mass Culture**

Our daily life is surrounded and invaded by popular culture. For instance, music, soap operas on television, comic books and sports, etc. We cannot imagine our life without these. It is only in the industrial societies that we see this form of culture.

In past, we only had high culture and folk culture. The difference between them was that high culture was mostly related to a small, literate and elite group which is the upper class. They encouraged and sustained such a culture. High culture relates to the classics of literature, the great traditions of art and sculpture.

On the other hand, folk culture was mostly in relation to the folk people. It gave expression to the serious and significant in life. It was about birth and death, man and woman, child and adult, the seasons, justice, cruelty, fate and destiny. It was shared by everyone and commonly participated in. The folk people entertained themselves through it, especially on ceremonial occasions like weddings, religious holidays, celebration of harvest, etc.

Industrialization brought about changes which have severely affected industrial capitalism and human culture. It is due to the mass production that we have a mass of consumer goods. There is also movement of people from villages to cities. Folk culture has receded

and now it is mass media which plays a very important role. It is the mass media which promotes and distributes a mass culture. Mass culture is mass-manufactured and mass-produced. It is the culture which is tailored according to the tastes of the mass audiences. Therefore, mass culture refers to the cultural products solely designed for mass consumption. Popular culture is a positive term for mass-produced or mass-disseminated cultural products.

Growth and spread of mass culture is linked with development of technology for communication. Initially, the printing press, then radio and later television, all made this type of culture popular. Mass media, mass produced the culture for mass tastes.

According to the scholars, generally, mass culture and popular culture are terms which are used interchangeably. But there is a difference. Popular culture refers to a culture which is shared, accepted and liked by people. It is not the culture of the elite. Mass culture is a culture which cuts across and includes a range of social classes and groups. For example, the soap operas, attract a huge audience which includes middle-class housewives as well as college going students, etc.

According to some other thinkers, mass culture and popular culture refer to the same thing, that is, culture manufactured wholesale for the market. No doubt, mass or popular culture is derived from high culture, but at the same time, it refers to an item of lesser importance. Forms of popular culture include television soap operas, comics, magazines, popular music and cinema.

Social scientists debate the distinction between culture for the elites and culture for the masses. Some sociologists argue that social class determines cultural differences, while others argue that the media dissolve class-based distinctions between high and popular culture and instead create “media cultures”. Another point of debate among sociologists is the extent to which mass culture is detrimental to the public which consumes it and to society as a whole.

Since the 1930s, most discussions of recorded culture have distinguished between culture for the elites, often termed “high” culture, and culture for the mass public called “popular” or “mass” culture. By and large, sociologists have contended that the characteristics of different social classes determine their cultural preferences. Things such as wealth, education, and upbringing are associated with preference for high culture – cultural products designed for, patronized by, and often controlled by a small number of society’s elite. Those who possess little or no education and wealth typically consume popular culture which is created by the economic elite.

American sociologists have asserted that high culture and popular culture express absolutely different values and also represent different aesthetic standards. There is a distinct separation between high and popular culture, that the two are consumed by different classes, and that the prestige of each class is attached to its culture.

Some conservative critics claim that mass culture is profane and dehumanizing and that it encroaches upon high cultural production. Such critics call for the re-establishment and protection of high culture for elite consumption.

Some radical critics agree with the conservative assessment of mass culture as destructive and dehumanizing but they focus on mass culture's negative impact on those who consume it and upon society as a whole rather than on the high culture upon which it encroaches.

Radical critics who share this orientation often call for "cultural mobility", raising the masses' tastes through education, opportunity and economic redistribution. Cultural mobility, it is argued, would free the public from the demagoguery of the economic elite and provide them the opportunity to appreciate high culture fare.

In the middle of the debate stand moderate or liberal critics who take the position that popular culture is harmful neither to the people who consume it nor to the society as a whole. They declare that all taste cultures are of equal worth if they meet the needs of the public. These liberal sociologists therefore call for the reinvigoration of various taste cultures or subcultures.

In the late 1980s, many sociologists and communication scholars began challenging validity of the class-based distinction between high culture and popular culture. Viewing this classification as increasingly arbitrary, some critics claim that modern media, particularly television, create "media cultures" accessible to multiple taste public. Many sociologists and communication scholars now argue that media culture, rather than high culture, sets the standards for culture and shapes popular taste.

### **Stuart Hall – Circuit of Culture**

University of Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in 1963-64 was founded by **Hoggart and Stuart Hall**. They developed a variety of critical approaches for analysis, interpretation and criticism of cultural artefacts. They focused on the interplay of representations and ideologies of class, gender, race, ethnicity and nationality in cultural texts, including media culture. They were among the first to study the effects of newspapers, radio, television, films and other popular cultural forms on audiences. Focus was also on how

various audiences interpreted and used media culture in different ways and contexts.

**Hall** suggested that political economy in some ways structures encoding and decoding of media objects. Media culture is produced within an industrial organization of production. Here, products are generated according to codes and models accepted within culture industries. In 1973, Hall published an essay called "*Encoding/Decoding*". In this, he proposed a model of media reception. According to Hall, certain cultural codes are so widely circulated and integrated into the mainstream culture that they can be seen as "naturalized". These codes are most likely to be received in ways which closely resemble the meanings put forward by the encoder. He says that majority of people decode culture meanings by producing "negotiated" readings which are a product of their own experiences and local culture.

Stuart Hall has analyzed in his article "*Encoding/Decoding*" culture as a continuous circuit. It encompasses "production-distribution-production". He says that we need to analyze how media audiences produce messages, how they circulate the messages and how the audiences use or decode the messages to create meaning. He analyzed the products and institutions of corporate culture with study of Sony Walkman. Here, the culture is a description of a particular way of life. It expresses certain meanings and values. There is a continuous process of cultural encoding and distribution. The way culture is produced, circulated and decoded by the audiences is controlled by advertising, marketing and design. Through circuit of culture, we can study and analyze the meaning of cultural artefacts. Hall studied circuit of culture and analyzed the Walkman (Sony). It is important to focus on the representation of things. This is because the way things are represented affects our understanding of them and how they get shared with others.

The launch of the Walkman by Sony was very carefully timed. It coincided with the school holidays as it was mostly targeted towards the youth. For this reason, it was not very highly priced. Therefore, its production was done keeping this factor in mind. It was also marketed and advertised (represented) from this point of view. Mobile urban youth were represented using the product. This way, the product was linked to its target users by making them identify with it. Through this, we can understand why media culture studies should focus more on analyzing media corporations, practices and promotion campaigns. It helps us to grasp the ways in which media culture is produced, circulated and distributed.

## **(6) Culture and Industry**

### **Fiske – 'Culture Industry' vs. Reading Popular Culture**

In the usage by **John Fiske** and other thinkers of cultural studies, the terms 'Popular Culture' and 'the popular', suggest that people themselves choose and construct the popular. Here, popular culture describes culture of, by and for the people. In this, the people create and participate in cultural practices which articulate their experiences and aspirations.

Fiske has tried to provide the term 'Popular Culture' with an inflection consistent with the socially critical approach of cultural studies. He defines 'Popular' as that which the audiences make of and do with the commodities of the culture industries. These Culture Industries operate in a market which is governed by commercial and ideological imperatives. For him, there can be no instance of popular which involves domination. Therefore, according to Fiske, 'popular' is excluded from any domination and manipulation.

Fiske held that a cultural analysis of cultural texts and audience reception would reveal the way the dominant ideology was structured in the text and into the reading subject. It would also reveal the textual features which enable negotiated, resisting or opposition readings. In addition, it would help to reach a satisfactory conclusion by studying historically and socially located meanings. This idea excluded analyses of how texts are manufactured within the context of political economy and system of production of culture. It also leaves out how audiences are formed by a variety of social institutions, practices, ideologies and through use of different media.

Fiske claimed that a cultural studies analysis of Madonna needed to analyze her marketing strategies, use of new media technologies, and skilful exploitation of the themes in keeping within their socio-historical moment. All these would account for important dimension of the "Madonna Phenomenon". Madonna first emerged in the moment of Reaganism and she embodied the materialistic and consumer-oriented ethos of the 1980s. She appeared at the time of fashion fever, MTV, intense marketing and promotion. Madonna's popularity was mostly a function of her marketing and promotion strategies, along with creative fabrication of music videos and images which appealed to diverse audiences. The meanings and effects of her artefacts can therefore be best understood within the context of their production and reception. This involved discussing MTV, the music industry, concerts, marketing and construction of images. We also need to study the audiences as individuals and also as members of distinctive groups like teenage girls. Along with that, we need to analyze how her work might reproduce a consumer culture which gets identity in terms of images and consumption.

The fetishism of 'popular' in contemporary cultural studies overlooks the role of marketing and public relations strategies which actually help to produce the so-called popular. The 'popular', is not just created by the audiences alone, as Fiske pointed out. It is actually negotiated between audiences and cultural producers. This is with the mediation of the culture industry, hype, public relations and media discourses.

The Popular is produced by advertising, public relation, critics and general media. The audiences are told which movies to watch, which television shows to see, which music to listen, etc. Therefore, the popular is actually a negotiated interaction between the audiences and culture industries. Culture industries relates to the process of industrialization of mass-produced culture and commercial imperatives. Commodities of creative industries exhibit the same features as other products of mass production: commodification, standardization and massification. The products of culture industries had a specific function. They provided ideological legitimacy to the capitalist societies and integrated individuals into the framework of mass culture and society.

These culture industries pay people huge amounts of money to accurately research what will sell in the market and then aggressively produce and market such profitable products.



NOOBY

WANA LEARN IN A JIFFY?  
READ NOOBY & PROBYS'  
SMART CHAT....



PROBY

1 Hey Bro... **N**

Hi ... tell me.. **P**

2 Is there anything  
common in all  
cultural theories? ☹️ **N**

YES. The concept of **P**  
CULTURE is central  
in ALL these theories 😊

3 WOW...  
GOTCHA!  
THANKS. 😊 **N**

Anything Else Bro...? **P**

4 Main point of  
Marxist Theory  
is..... **N**

It called for creation **P**  
of a totally new social  
order in which all  
social classes would  
be abolished.

|   |                                    |   |
|---|------------------------------------|---|
| 5 | Bro...<br>What is<br>HERMENEUTICS? | N |
|---|------------------------------------|---|

|   |  |
|---|--|
| P | It is a tradition of<br>humanist criticism of<br>religious and literary<br>text. |
|---|--|

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| 6 | What is meant<br>by...“Media is a<br>pluralistic public<br>forum” | N |
|---|---|---|

|   |   |
|---|---|
| P | It means.....<br>Media may prove to be<br>a platform where the<br>power of dominant<br>elites can be easily<br>challenged |
|---|---|

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| 7 | Tell me at least 3<br>needs of culture<br>studies ..... | N |
|---|---|---|

|   |   |
|---|---|
| P | Simple .....  |
|   | 1. Provides tools by<br>which an individual<br>can read & interpret<br>one’s own culture. |
|   | 2. Subverts the<br>distinction between<br>High & Low culture                              |
|   | 3. It lends itself to a<br>multiculturalist<br>programme.                                 |

8 Are there different types of audiences? **N**

Yes  
Three types  
1. Information Seeking  
2. Reaction Seeking  
3. Conversion Seeking **P**

9 What are the key concepts in cultural studies? **N**

There are 8: **P**  
1. Representation  
2. Materialism  
3. Non-reductionism  
4. Articulation  
5. Power  
6. Popular culture  
7. Texts & readers and  
8. Subjectivity & identity

10 Could you please tell me ONE line about each key concept plz..... **N**

OK **P**  
1. Representation: It is that which connects meaning and language to culture  
2. Materialism: It is concerned with understanding How and WHY specific

meanings are inscribed at the time of production.

3. Non-reductionism: It is that by virtue of which each culture is viewed as having its own particular meanings, rules & practices, which CANNOT be explained only in terms of some OTHER category of social formation.
4. Articulation: Means expressing and/or 'putting together'. It is actually a framework of connections which can create UNITY of some distinct elements, under certain conditions.
5. Power: It is the capacity of imposing one's will on OTHERS.
6. Popular culture: These are the grounds upon which subordination takes place due to coercion or consent.
7. Texts & Readers: The written word as well as the practices signified, e.g., books, TV, film, clothes, etc. Readers are those who see them & draw meanings.
8. Subjectivity and identity: It is the SENSE of self and process of definition of that sense.

|    |                  |   |
|----|------------------|---|
| 11 | What is culture? | N |
|----|------------------|---|

|   |   |
|---|---|
| P | Culture is all that a human being learns and acquires by virtue of being a member of society. |
|---|---|

|    |  |   |
|----|--|---|
| 12 | What is the classical definition of culture? | N |
|----|--|---|

|   |   |
|---|---|
| P | It is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom & other capabilities and habits acquired by a human being as a member of society. |
|---|---|

|    |   |   |
|----|---|---|
| 13 | Can you plz. tell me Five Imp. FEATURES of Culture? | N |
|----|---|---|

|   |   |
|---|---|
| P | There are more than 15 features of culture.<br>Five of them:<br>1. Uniqueness<br>2. Identity<br>3. Belongingness<br>4. Pride<br>5. Acquired |
|---|---|

|    |  |   |
|----|--|---|
| 14 | Cud u plz. tell me various theoretical Perspectives with respect to culture?<br>Thanks 😊 | N |
|----|--|---|

Basically, these are six theoretical perspectives with respect to CULTURE:

1. DIFFUSIONISM
2. CULTURAL MATERIALISM
3. FUNCTIONALISM
4. SOCIAL INTERACTION
5. POPULAR & MASS CULTURE
6. CULTURE AND INDUSTRY

**P**

15 The transmission of an innovation takes place in what stages.

**N**

The transmission takes place in 5 stages:

1. AWARENESS
2. ADOPTION
3. ACCEPTANCE
4. SPREAD &
5. CHANGE

**P**

16 What is the basic difference between Psychological functionalism & Structural functionalism?

**N**

P.F → Focusses on **P**  
How society functions  
to SERVE an  
individual's needs.  
S.F → Stresses on the  
structure of society, the  
way it's reflected in  
different institutions  
which function to  
perpetuate the survival  
of society.

17  
Could you plz.  
classify the following  
list of needs as: **N**  
1. Biological  
2. Derived and  
3. Synthetic needs  
List: Law, religion,  
nutrition, protection  
and education

OK. **P**  
1. Biological → Nutrition &  
Protection  
2. Derived → Law &  
Education  
3. Synthetic → Religion  
☺

18  
In the primitive **N**  
societies were there  
any functions of  
MAGIC?

Of course **P**

1. Social Functions:  
Primitive people engage COLLECTIVELY in magic. This reinforces their social group SOLIDARITY & COHESIVENESS.
2. Psychological Functions: Magic relieves their pent up anxiety, uncertainty and tension.

19 What is Totemism? **N**

It is a belief in which each human is thought to have a spiritual connection with another physical being, e.g., tree or animal or plant. **P**

20 How do we learn social roles? **N**

We learn social roles through interaction and through experiences in daily life situations. **P**

21 Plz. fill the blank. **N**  
\_\_\_\_\_ are the  
basis of social life.

SYMBOLS **P**

22 What is meant by: **N**  
“Looking glass self?”

It is a term which is **P**  
used to describe the  
PROCESS by which  
the sense of SELF  
develops in a human  
being.

23 Plz. tell me 3 **N**  
elements of “Looking  
glass self”.

- P**
1. We image how we appear to those around us.
  2. We interpret OTHER’S reactions
  3. We develop a ‘SELF CONCEPT’.

24 Is ‘POPULAR’ **N**  
culture different from  
‘MASS’ culture?

Not really. **P**  
‘POPULAR’ culture is  
a positive term for  
‘MASS’ culture, which  
is MASS PRODUCED  
acc. to the tastes of  
MASS audiences.

25 But, I think there is 'SOME' difference too na..... **N**

Well. Technically **YES**. Some scholars say that 'POPULAR culture' is that culture which is **ACCEPTED** and **LIKED** by people. Whereas, 'MASS' culture is a culture which **CUTS ACROSS** and **INCLUDES** a **WIDER RANGE** of social classes & groups. **P**

26 How do majority of individuals decode culture meanings? **N**

**COOL**  
Majority of people decode culture meanings by producing 'NEGOTIATED' readings, which are a **PRODUCT** of their **OWN** experiences and **LOCAL** culture. **P**

27 Why is it Imp. to **FOCUS** on representation of things? **N**

**OBVIOUSLY**  
**BRO.....**  
Because the way things are **REPRESENTED** affects our understanding of them and also affects **HOW** they get **SHARED** with others. **P**

|    |  |   |
|----|--|---|
| 28 | What is FISKE'S idea of 'Popular' culture? | N |
|----|--|---|

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Acc. to FISKE<br>It is the culture of, BY & FOR the people 😊<br>However, the 'Popular' is NOT just created by the audiences ALONE.<br>It is actually negotiated between audiences & cultural producers. | P |
|---|---|

### Recap

#### (a) Introduction to Cultural Studies: Evolution, Need and Significance of Cultural Studies

**Evolution of Culture Studies:** During the 1950s and 1960s, interest in cultural theories of mass communication began to develop

and take hold. There was a debate about whether the media has the power to intrude into and alter how we make sense of ourselves and our social world. The theories regarding it are quite diverse and offer very different answers to questions about the role of media in affecting social life. Nonetheless, the concept of culture is central in all these theories. Media affects society because it affects how *culture* is created, shared, learnt and applied. Cultural theories offer a broad range of interesting ideas about how media can affect culture and also provide many different views concerning the long-term consequences of the cultural changes effected by media.

Most British cultural studies theories can be labelled Neo-Marxist. Modern European cultural studies theories make use of a different source – a tradition of humanist criticism of religious and literary texts that is referred to as *hermeneutics*. One common objective was to identify those texts that had greatest cultural value and to interpret them so that their value would be understood and appreciated by others. Texts were seen as a civilizing force in the society.

One early prominent school of Neo-Marxist theory developed during the 1930s at the University of Frankfurt and became known as the Frankfurt School. This school combined Marxist critical theory with hermeneutics. It viewed high culture as something which had its own integrity, had inherent value, and could not be used by elites to enhance their personal power. During the 1960s and 1970s, two important schools of Neo-Marxist theory emerged in Great Britain: British Cultural Studies and Political Economic Theory.

**Need for Culture Studies:** It focuses on the use of media to create various forms of culture which structure everyday life. It provides tools which enable us to read and interpret our culture critically. It subverts the distinction between the high and low culture and allows critical scrutiny of culture without prior prejudices, towards one or another sort of cultural text. Cultural studies also specifies what ideology is operative in a given cultural artefact and shows how much media culture manipulates and indoctrinates us.

### **Key Concepts in Cultural Studies**

**(a) Representation:** Cultural studies emphasize focus on representation which refers to how the world is socially constructed and represented to us by ourselves in meaningful ways. The major stress of cultural studies is on the study of culture as the signifying practice of representation.

**(b) Materialism:** Cultural studies have developed a form of cultural materialism concerned with understanding how and why

specific meanings are inscribed at the time of production. In addition to keeping the focus on signifying practices, cultural studies also try to connect them to political economy. In this manner, cultural studies, as a discipline is concerned with power and the distribution of economic and social resources.

**(c) Non-reductionism:** A central characteristic of cultural studies is its non-reductionism. In this, each culture is viewed as having its own particular meanings, rules and practices, which cannot be reduced to or explained only in terms of some other category or level of social formation.

**(d) Articulation:** It links cultural or social phenomena. The concept of articulation has been deployed by cultural studies for theorizing the relationships among various components of a social formation. It points towards the formation of temporary unity among elements which do not necessarily have to go together. Articulation refers to expressing/representing as well as 'putting together'. Articulation, in cultural studies, is a method used to analyze culture.

**(e) Power:** Power is the capacity of imposing one's will on others. It is a common argument that media has too much power. There is startling agreement among cultural studies writers about the centrality of the concept of power. For them, power is seen as pervading at every level of social relationships.

**(f) Popular culture:** Subordination takes place due to coercion as well as consent. Cultural studies understands popular culture as the grounds on which this consent is obtained or lost. In order to understand the interplay of power and consent, two related concepts of ideology and hegemony are often deployed in the earlier texts of cultural studies.

**(g) Texts and readers:** Production of consent refers to popular identification to cultural meanings by signifying practices of hegemonic texts. Text refers to written word as well as the practices signified. Texts generally describe a range of cultural objects. Meaning is produced by the interplay of text and reader.

**(h) Subjectivity and identity:** Identity is the sense of self and the process of definition of that sense. It is commonly argued that media plays a significant role in this process. Cultural studies looks into: how we come to be the kind of people we are; how we are produced as subjects; and how we identify with descriptions of ourselves.

## **(b) Theories and its Relevance in Media**

**Concept of Culture:** In everyday life, we make use of the term 'culture'. We speak about it very often in context to 'how culture exists',

‘how culture is changing’ and ‘what are the elements that represent our culture’. Now let us examine, what exactly is ‘culture’.

Culture is all that man learns and acquires by virtue of being a member of society. It includes all aspects of human activity: from the fine arts to popular entertainment, from everyday behaviour to the development of sophisticated technology. It includes plans, rules, techniques, designs and even the policies made for better living.

There is a very close relationship existing between culture and mass media. They both influence each other to a great extent. On one hand, culture determines the content matter of mass media. On the other hand, mass media also influences culture. It is generally believed and often asserted that the Mass Media is a very powerful means of spreading culture, determining and controlling thoughts and actions of people to a very great degree in society.

There are various theoretical perspectives with respect to culture. Some of them are as follows:

**(1) Diffusionism:** Diffusionism is an approach which views the transformation of culture change and evolution of society. It is a school of thought which uses the comparative method to explain why different societies are at dissimilar levels in terms of their development and maintains that societal change takes place when societies borrow cultural traits from one another.

**Alfred L. Kroeber** significantly contributed to the theory of diffusionism. According to him, diffusion is a process by which cultural material spreads. The diffused cultural material contains specific elements by which diffusion can be recognized. Diffusion in some cases is piecemeal, where only fragments of a larger system reach or are accepted by the affected culture. These bits may diffuse more widely than the culture complexes of which they form a partial part.

Kroeber put forward the concept of “idea transmission” or “stimulus transmission”. In his article *Stimulus Diffusion* (1940), he said that, cultural products may be imitated by people who did not have direct contact with its originators. A broad idea is passed on from one culture to another, but the receiving culture or civilization only internalizes those pieces of the received idea which are suitable for them.

**Diffusionism Theory in Media** explains how innovations are introduced and adopted by various communities. Developed by E. Rogers (1962) – He felt that role of communication was to transfer objects of technology to masses, as planned by authorities and policymakers.

**(2) Cultural Materialism:** This theory is associated with **Raymond Williams**. The analysis made in cultural materialism is based on critical theory, a tradition of Frankfurt School. Raymond Williams coined the term Cultural Materialism to describe a theoretical blending of Marxist analysis and leftist culturalism. Williams emphasized the material significance of culture. For him, culture is a lived experience. It consists of meanings generated by ordinary men and women, the lived experiences of the participants and the texts and practices engaged in by all people as they conduct their life.

Culture is not free of the material conditions. According to cultural materialism, culture is simply neither a reflection of economic forces and relationships, nor is it an abstract and idealistic entity. In fact, culture is made up of texts which are produced and consumed through social processes and ways of life of specific groups. Therefore, culture is material.

This theory is also concerned with the specific historical documents which are analysed. Cultural materialists analysed the methods by which hegemonic forces in society take control over historically important texts. Cultural materialists want to bring attention to the means used by contemporary power structures like the church or state in order to disseminate ideology.

Williams has insisted that culture is understood through the representations and practices of our daily life. Moreover, this has to be done in the context of material conditions of culture and their production. This, according to Raymond Williams, is cultural materialism.

**(3) Functionalism:** Functionalism is the view that society consists of institutions which serve important purposes for people. Rather than focusing on origins and evolution of society, the functionalists explored the relationships among different institutions and how these institutions functioned to serve society and/or individuals.

There are two divisions in functionalism:

**1. Psychological functionalism:** Bronislaw Malinowski's functionalism focused on how society functions to serve an individual's needs or interests.

**2. Structural functionalism:** A.R. Radcliffe Brown – is associated with this type of functionalism. He stressed on the structure of society, the way it was reflected in different institutions which function to perpetuate the survival of society. For him, a society's economic, political, religious and social institutions serve to integrate the society as a whole.

**Malinowski**, said that *every culture*, is a working whole, an "integrated unity, in which every element has a functional contribution

to make". The "function" of an "institution", i.e., an organized system of activity, is the part it plays within the interrelated whole in fulfilling human purposes or "needs". He distinguished three types or levels of needs, which had to be met by all cultures. Hence, these were termed as universal:

**Primary or biological needs:** Procreation, nutrition, defence and protection.

**Derived or instrumental needs:** Economical organization, law and education.

**Integrative or synthetic needs:** Knowledge, magic and religion, art and play.

He worked out a theory of human needs in relation to institution. He maintained that there are certain basic psycho-biological needs and every society has to evolve institutions to fulfil them. Thus, behind each institution, there is the basic psychological and biological need.

According to **Radcliffe Brown**, the main object of study in anthropology is the social structure and not culture. The social system comprises the sum total of all social relationships existing among individuals in a given society, who occupy social roles.

Brown knew that the basic need of every society is co-adaptation – which means mutual adjustment of individual members. A society exists and involves institutions to fulfil this basic need. He tried to explain this by reference to totemism in primitive society.

While Malinowski built system of thought around the concept of culture, Brown made the concept of society central. According to Brown, the "function" of an element of culture is "the part it plays in the social life as a whole, and therefore the contribution it makes to the maintenance of the structural continuity."

**(4) Social Interaction (Symbolic Interactionism):** Symbolic interaction was one of the first social theories to address that we use culture to learn. This theory developed during the 1920s and 1930s and it had a variety of labels until **Herbert Blumer** gave its current name in 1969.

**G.H. Mead** (1934), a University of Chicago philosopher and social activist, provided a suitable way of understanding social life. He put forward that each one of us learns successfully to play many different social roles through interaction with others. Our actions are being "conditioned" by others while simultaneously we are also affecting their actions. The goal is not to manipulate or dominate each other but rather to create and sustain a productive, social unit. Human socialization permits more or less conscious interpretation of stimuli and

also allows planned responses. And this happens because of symbols. The use of these symbols transforms the socialization process. Symbols mediate and structure our ability to perceive and interpret whatever goes on around us. Our actions in response to symbols are mediated (or controlled) largely by the same symbols. Therefore, a person's understanding of and relation to his or her physical or objective reality is moderated by the symbolic environment.

Symbols are the basis of social life; without symbols our social relations would be limited, for we would have no dependable mechanism for perceiving others in terms of relationships.

**Charles Horton Cooley**, a symbolic interactionist wondered how human infants develop a self – the ability to see themselves separate “from the outside”. Cooley saw the self as our interpretation of how others see us, the ability to contemplate our existence, to project ourselves into the past, into the future, and into various situations of life. Cooley concluded that this unique aspect of “humanness” is socially created; that is, our sense of self develops by interaction with others. He coined the term **looking-glass self** to describe the process by which the sense of self develops. The development of the self is an ongoing, lifelong process. The self is never a finished product but is always in process.

**(5) Popular and Mass Culture, Circuit of Culture:** Our daily life is surrounded and invaded by popular culture. For instance music, soap operas on television, comic books and sports, etc. We cannot imagine our life without these. It is only in the industrial societies that we see this form of culture.

Mass culture is mass-manufactured and mass-produced. It is the culture which is tailored according to the tastes of the mass audiences. Therefore, mass culture refers to cultural products solely designed for mass consumption. Popular culture is a positive term for mass-produced or mass-disseminated cultural products.

Growth and spread of mass culture is linked with development of technology used for communication.

**Stuart Hall – Circuit of Culture:** Stuart Hall suggested that political economy in some ways structures encoding and decoding of media objects. Media culture is produced within an industrial organization of production. Here, products are generated according to codes and models accepted within culture industries. In 1973, Hall published an essay called “Encoding/Decoding”. In this, he proposed a model of media reception. According to Hall, certain cultural codes are so widely circulated and integrated into the mainstream culture that they can be seen as “naturalised”. These codes are most likely to be received

in ways which closely resemble the meanings put forward by the encoder. He says that majority of people decode culture meanings by producing “negotiated” readings which are a product of their own experiences and local culture.

Stuart Hall has analyzed in his article “Encoding/Decoding” culture as a continuous circuit. It encompasses “production- distribution- production”. He says that we need to analyse how media audiences produce messages, how they circulate the messages and how the audiences use or decode the messages to create meaning. Through circuit of culture, we can study and analyze the meaning of cultural artefacts. This theory helps us to understand why media culture studies should focus more on analyzing media corporations, practices and promotion campaigns. It helps us to grasp the ways in which media culture is produced, circulated and distributed.

**(6) Culture and Industry: Fiske: ‘Culture Industry’ vs. Reading Popular Culture:** In the usage by John Fiske & other thinkers of cultural studies, the terms ‘Popular Culture’ and ‘the popular’, suggest that people themselves choose and construct the popular culture. Here, popular culture describes culture of, by and for the people. In this, the people create and participate in cultural practices which articulate their experiences and aspirations.

He defines ‘Popular’ as that which the audiences make of and do with the commodities of the culture industries. These Culture Industries operate in a market which is governed by commercial and ideological imperatives. For him, there can be no instance of popular which involves domination. Therefore, according to Fiske, ‘popular’ is excluded from any domination and manipulation.

Fiske held that a cultural analysis of cultural texts and audience reception would reveal the way the dominant ideology was structured in the text and into the reading subject. The ‘popular’, is not just created by the audiences alone, as Fiske pointed out. It is actually negotiated between audiences and cultural producers. This is with the mediation of the culture industry, hype, public relations and media discourses.

The popular is produced by advertising, public relation, critics and general media. The popular is actually a negotiated interaction between the audiences and culture industries. Culture industries relates to the process of industrialization of mass-produced culture and commercial imperatives. The products of culture industries had a specific function. They provided ideological legitimacy to the capitalist societies and integrated individuals into the framework of mass culture and society. These culture industries pay people huge amounts of money to accurately research what will sell in the market and then aggressively produce and market such profitable products.

## QUESTIONS

1. Write a note on the evolution and need for cultural studies.
2. Trace the history of cultural studies.
3. Explain the significance of cultural studies.
4. Discuss the theory of Diffusionism with special reference to the media.
5. Briefly explain the viewpoints of Malinowski and Brown, with respect to cultural studies.
6. What is the Social Interaction theory? Elaborate on the ideas of C.H. Cooley and G.H. Mead.
7. Elucidate the concept of Popular Culture.
8. Explain Stuart Hall's idea of circuit of culture.
9. Elaborate on the views of John Fiske about Culture and Industry.
10. Explain Cultural materialism as discussed by Raymond Williams.
11. Write short notes on:
  - (a) Representation
  - (b) Materialism
  - (c) Non-reductionism
  - (d) Articulation
  - (e) Power
  - (f) Texts and readers
  - (h) Subjectivity and identity



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