

## A NOTE ON THE DEFINITION OF CULTURE

The concept of culture is a key concept of the social sciences. It has sometimes been analysed with acumen and analytic insight by philosophers also. The present paper is concerned mainly with a study of the definitions of culture by comparing the definitions made by the social scientists and by philosophers. In conclusion, however, I shall try to make a few observations about what, in my opinion, really does count as culture.

### I

It is judicious to start with the social scientists approach to the concept of culture.

Evaluation of arguments about what counts as culture is, in the social sciences, in terms of whether the arguments are logically consistent or not; it rather predominantly is in terms of whether the proposed account of what counts as culture can, or cannot, *adequately describe* an existing situation. (Such a phenomenon is hardly surprising in view of the commitment of anthropologists and sociologists to the method adopted by the sciences).

We can test the validity of our remark, at the outset, with an example. R. Williams suggests that there is an inevitable tension between the 'common and popular use' of the term "culture" and the 'anthropological and sociological uses of the term.' He says that if culture is viewed, in the popular sense as— "a body of artistic and intellectual work" to which great value is attached—it is difficult from such a position, to accept the anthropological and sociological uses of the word 'culture' according to which "culture refers to what individuals belonging to different societies do and make and think, without regard to any artistic and intellectual merit." He continues: "When such differences in usage refer, as in this case, to real and important differences in viewpoint, it would be arbitrary and dogmatic to distinguish the one "proper" meaning of 'culture' and to condemn all others". (R. Williams, *Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, Vol II, p. 274).

Take another controversy about the essence of culture. The controversy here is around Tylor's equation of culture with  
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civilization. It is pointed out by some of his critics (anthropologists and sociologists) here that the equation is unacceptable, inasmuch as taking civilization as denoting as so-called "advanced and urbanized and materially prosperous state of living", one can legitimately argue that all societies (including the so-called 'primitive ones') have a 'culture' but only some have reached civilization.

In contrast with the method adopted by the social scientists, philosophers try to resolve the dispute regarding the analysis of a particular concept generally by trying to see whether the putative analysis is free from logical inconsistency or not. We shall comment at length about philosophers' approach to the concept of culture very soon. Let me, at this stage, try to instantiate my point about philosophical analysis of problems with the help of the analysis of a different concept, viz. the concept of cause. Take for example the debate which centres around whether a cause is the same as necessary and sufficient conditions. It is argued by critics that if causes are regarded as necessary and sufficient conditions, then the distinction between a cause and an effect is not maintained. (*Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, Vol. II, p 64). For, it is pointed out that concerning any event or set of events A and any event or set of events B, if A is necessary and sufficient condition of B and therefore the cause of B according to the definition suggested, then it follows that B is also necessary and sufficient condition of A and therefore, by the same definition, the cause of A. But few would want to say that a match's igniting is a cause of its being struck, that a stone's burning is the cause of the sun's shining upon it.

It should be noted further that when anthropologists and sociologists are talking about the concept of culture, they are not really trying to give an exposition of what is meant by 'culture', they are really discussing what are the *manifestations* of culture. For, it is in terms of manifestations alone that they can better *describe* particular groups and *classify* particular societies having particular cultures. This will be evident if we consider the remarks of the exponents of the so-called 'pattern theories of culture' such as : 'Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups including their embodiments in artefacts'. (A. L. Kroeber

and Clyde Kluckhohn, *Culture, A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions*, Cambridge, Mass, 1952, P 181).

Culture, as I understand it, is a complex logical construct which has to be constructed in order to give an adequate explanation of the activities (including mental activities) of particular human groups, resulting sometimes in enduring achievements such as art, literature, etc., sometimes in enduring mores such as laws, customs. It is also that which renders intelligible thoughts and values of groups of people. Culture cannot and does not therefore consist either of the behaviour of groups of men, or of the transformations which these groups bring about or which they suffer. All the aforesaid phenomena are rather to be looked upon as the different modes of expression of *culture*, which in itself always transcends these modes. Culture in itself is a non-naturalistic phenomenon. And it is impossible to derieve it from a survey of the products of a cultured mind. Such a survey may at most suggest to us the existence of a creative cultured consciousness. But we would only come to grief if we expect to conceive the meaning of culture from such a survey. Yet it is this important truth which has generally<sup>1</sup> been overlooked in the investigations of cultural anthropology. Some of the classic remarks made by the stalwarts of anthropology will instantiate our point.

Let us start with Herskovits' description of culture as the sum total of man's "learned behaviour", as "the things people have, the things they do and what they think". (*Man and His works*, M. J. Herskovits, p 625) Take again Tylor's attempt to define culture as that which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs and other habits acquired by man.. " (*Primitive Culture*, Vol. I, 4th edition, E. B. Tylor, p 252) Malinowski equates culture, with social heritage, comprising "inherited artefacts, goods, technical processes, ideas, habits and values. (*Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, 1962, Vol. IV, p 621). It is perhaps in the same spirit that some social anthropologists attempt to define culture in terms of "social heredity" and "social tradition" (cf. *Anthropology*, A. L Kroeber, P. 252).

Culture, as the social scientists present it, is a motley specimen of curious ways of doing and thinking things, including in some cases, the lasting accomplishments of such activities and

thought. One must not undermine the value of the endeavour undertaken by the social scientists in their enterprising investigation into culture. Yet, it must be pointed out that the social scientist resembles in spirit the doctor who, being unable to identify the exact cause of a malady, tries to bring the various symptoms of the disease on the patient under control by trying on him various broad spectrum group of drugs. Anthropology, like other natural sciences, looks for generalised findings as to how culture *operates*, how human being behave under given cultural conditions, and for the major developments of the history of culture (and then tries to co-relate such findings). Yet the anthropologists seem to be oblivious of the fact that what they are looking for are really the *criteria* by means of which we find out whether particular societies have any culture or not. They cannot, by themselves, be constitutive of the *meaning* of culture.

Culture, as I have already pointed out, is a (unobserved) complex construct in terms of which alone an adequate explanation of observed happenings can be given. It is not a predetermined, unalterably fixed phenomenon which regulates the behaviour, norms and ideas of people. While it is undoubtedly true that culture shapes and influences the lives, thought and actions of people belonging to particular culture groups, the individuals of particular societies also sometimes bring about changes in the culture. In this sense individuals (at least some) and their cultures may be said to nourish one another. Most social scientists, however, would emphatically deny the possibility of such innovations being wrought in the body of culture by individuals. I shall try to clarify my point with the help of some remarks made by sociologists in the following way: "Attitudes, values and goals" observe Horton and Hunt, "are *defined* by the culture, while the individual normally learns them as unconsciously as he learns the language" (*Sociology*, P. B. Horton and C. L. Hunt, p 60 Italics ours). Some other interesting observations made by the same authors will also come in handy in illustrating our point. Consider for example the statements, "Each culture *defines* the desirable goals and praiseworthy values ....". "In these ways culture *determines* the goals of life" (Horton and Hunt, op. cit. p 71, italics ours). "From before he is born until after he is dead man is a prisoner of his culture. His culture directs and *confines* his behaviour,

limits his goals .....". "His culture gets into his mind and shuts his vision so that he sees what he is supposed to see, dreams what he is expected to dream, and hungers what he is trained to hunger." (op. cit. p 73).

Culture, however, is not any inflexible and unalterable system of attitudes, goals and values and practices. In reality it is amenable to a good deal of modifications and innovations. These innovations are sometimes brought about unconsciously and deliberately by individuals and reformers. Sometimes again, a particular pattern of culture appears in a society unconsciously, either due to influences of other cultures, or due to people's changing patterns of living. Let us consider some concrete instances of changes in the cultural heritage of people we have been talking about.

People introduce practices which they consider just, necessary or equitable and seek justification for them by reference to practices in the past. Take the example of the introduction of widow remarriage among Hindus. The idea of widow remarriage was abhorant to Hindus of the nineteenth century. Pandit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar saw the inequity and hardship caused by this practice to a large section. He therefore introduced, with the support of fresh legislation, the practice of widow remarriage. As justification for this change he stressed on a verse in *Parāśara Saṁhitā* showing religious sanction for such practice. The verse runs as below:

“naṣṭe mṛte pravrajite klive ca patite patau  
āpatsu pañcasu nārinām patiranyo vidhiyate.”

Widow remarriage as a social more was never a universal practice among Hindus. The reference in *Parāśara Saṁhitā* was perhaps to the practice prevalent in certain localities or among certain classes of this vast and conglomerate country. Vidyasagar used this as unqualified and universal support for widow remarriage. The attitude of contemporary Hindu society was substantially altered by Vidyasagar's procedure in dealing with the matter.

In the face of such incidences the unqualified remarks made by sociologists that the individual “dreams what he is expected to dream and hungers what he is trained to hunger” seems to be rather preposterous.

A slightly different example is that of adoption of practices in vogue among other communities. Worship by Hindus is basically a personal affair for each individual. Community worship

was not in vogue formerly among Hindus. But Islam showed to Hindus the value of community worship. Lord Sri Chaitanya introduced among Hindus a modified form of community worship. Such worship is now common among Hindus. The idea behind it appears to be to adopt, with modifications, where necessary, useful and desirable practices among other communities.

In fact the entire fabric of the variegated Hindu culture seems to be the result of such a tendency to adopt attitudes, values and practices prevalent in other cultures. The whole of Hindu culture, as we see it today, is a result of amalgumation of both Vedic Aryan and Non-Vedic Non-Aryan practices and beliefs. Let us take an example. There are two main traditions in the Hindu religious rites, viz. "havya" and "kavya" groups of rituals. The former refers to worship of Gods and the latter, "kavya", to rituals like "Śrāddha" and "tarpana". "Havya" follows the ancient Vedic tradition. The Aryans, however started following the Non-Aryan "kavya" tradition much later. In "śrāddha" ceremony people connected by relationship through women such as mother's father, mother's brother, sister's son, son-in-law, daughter's sons, son's of father's sisters and son's of mother's sisters are *the most honoured guests*. ( *Kurma Purāṇa*, Uparibhāga, 21, 20 ). Matriarchy and other forms of supremacy of women are Non-Aryan practices! The absence of such practices in Vedic literature and evidence of its existence among Non-Vedic people clearly indicate that the practices are of Non-Aryan origin.

There are traces of the Non--Aryan genesis of the śrāddha cult in other *purāṇas* also.<sup>2</sup> The *Varāha purāṇa* says that it is from better to entertain a yogi, rather than a thousand Brahmins in the "Śrāddha" ceremony : " Sahasrāpi Viprāṇām yogi cet purataḥ sthitaḥ. ( *Varāha Purāṇa*, 14, 50 ). The *Kurma Purāṇa* is of the opinion that the devotees of Shiva and Vishnu are the most honoured people in the " Śrāddha" ceremony. ( *Kurma Purāṇa*, Uparibhaga, 21, 9 ). Note that the way of the Yogis is not the Vedic way. The devotees of Vishnu and Shiva follow the non--Vedic Bhāgavata tradition. Even the account of the origin of " Pitṛ Yajña " ceremony, as found in the *Mahābhārata*, will go a long way to show how the Aryans embraced the " kavya " cult at a later period from the Non-Aryans and how they struggled to assure the people of the equitableness and justice of the new cult. Nimi, the originator of the " Śrāddha "



cult was overcome with grief and repentance after the first performance of the ceremony, since it has not been performed in the past either by the ṛsis or by the devas. His father came from the heaven and reassured him by saying that Brahma himself has sanctioned this new ceremony giving it a place among the older yajna and naming it "Pitṛ-Yajña" (*Mahābhārata*, Anuśāsana Parva, 91, 20-21)

In the face of this mass of evidence, will it be unreasonable to claim that Hindu culture has undergone a good deal of metamorphosis in the long course of history?

Hindu culture has not only imbibed certain practices from other social groups but has also accepted their beliefs and intellectual conclusions. An example is that of India's acceptance of certain ideas from the Greeks, Hindu astrology is influenced to a considerable extent by ancient Greek astrology. It has not only accepted views of the Greek tradition, but has in many cases, even borrowed a whole host of technical Greek vocabulary. We are aware of the Greek genesis of words like "horā" and "drekkān". Even the names of the signs of the zodiac are taken in their entirety from Greek. Consider, for example, the following verse from *Horāśāstra* of Varāha Mihir :

"Kriyatā-burijitumakularileya pārthonaj karkopākhyāḥ"  
tauṣṭika ākokero hṛdrogaścerthaso kramaśaḥ'

(*Horāśāstra* 2.6)<sup>3</sup>

It is not Hindu culture alone, which has undergone transformation as a result of the impact of other cultures. Certain other cultures, such as some Islamic groups have accepted, as an integral part, the practices prevalent in other cultures. An example is the practice of Pir Darga worship by certain Indian Muslims. This particular form of worship is unknown in Arabia, the birth-place of Islam. But Muslims in many parts of India including the entire undivided Bengal, as well as in Eastern Iran take part in the worship of Pir's Darga, with devotion. This cult seems to be a modified version of the ancient tradition of worship of 'stupas' constructed over the bones or ashes of great personages, prevalent among both the Austric and Dravidian stock of people of India. The *Rāmāyana* and the *Mahābhārata* refer to this practice as "eḍuka pūjā". This practice appeared in a modified form among the Buddhists labelled as "caitya pūjā". Many

adherents of the "caitya pūjā" cult of ancient Afghanistan, northern India and undivided Bengal embraced Islam later on. "Caitya pūjā" seems to have been resurrected as worship of "Pir's Darga" *mutatis mutandis*. Although the orthodox followers of Islam condemn this cult as "pir parasti" and "gor parasti," the practice continues.

How can one, in these circumstances, insist that culture is an unalterably fixed phenomenon, which directs the lives and ideals of the people with inexorable necessity?

Let us turn to some more instances of changes introduced in practices, the changes being due to alterations of conditions of living. Take the practice of sea-voyage. Even upto about the middle of this century, sea-voyage was a taboo among the Hindus. Conditions in modern life, however, made such journeys not only profitable but also necessary in many cases. "Prāyaścitta" (purification penance) is a practice for getting rid of the sin of doing forbidden things. Upto about the middle of this century many Hindus who undertook sea-journeys got themselves 'purified' by 'prāyaścitta.' But as time passed Hindus noted that sea-journey was widely in practice among their predecessors centuries back. Many of them went to very distant lands and even colonised places like Bali, Java, Sumatra. By reference to these practices as forming part of their authentic ancient culture, Hindus later on accepted sea-voyage as a normal— not sinful practice. This change in attitude shows the recognition of the value of practices which were sometime held as undesirable.

Yet another instance of change creeping in a particular culture due to the changed conditions of living would be the following :

In most societies some behaviour patterns are generally looked down upon but are yet widely in vogue. In some societies these condemned forms of living exist side by side for centuries together with the mores which are supposed to outlaw them. Take the example of many Burmese Buddhists villagers who are supposed to practice 'ahimsā' and therefore to refrain from killing, yet are dependent on the murderous occupation of fisherman. They avoid this dilemma by not literally killing the fish which are merely put out on the bank to 'dry' after their long "soaking" in river, and "if they are foolish and ill-judged



enough to die while undergoing the process, it is their own fault ” (*Sociology* : Horton and Hunt, p 82).

In contrast with the ideal social norms and mores which are referred to as “ ideal culture ” by sociologists, deviations of the kind cited above are spoken of as “ real culture ” by the same. A clash between the “ real ” and “ ideal ” culture patterns, say Horton and Hunt, is generally avoided by some kind of rationalization. Complex society, they say, have many patterns which are formally condemned, enthusiastically practised, and skillfully rationalized. (Cf. *Sociology* Horton and Hunt, p 82 ).

Would it not be sheer foolhardiness to insist, in the face of such an enormous mass of instance, that culture is an unalterably fixed phenomenon ?

That culture does not stand for any pre-determined phenomenon completely immune to change, but that, on the contrary, it points to a changing process, is quite evident from the analysis of the concept in the classical Hindu religious discourses. The nearest equivalent of the word “ culture ” in Sanskrit is “ saṃskṛiti ” or “ saṃskāra ” ( and not “ kṛṣṭi ” contrary to popular opinion ). Here “ saṃskṛiti ” stands for refinement of the self. The *Aitereya Brāhmaṇa*, for instance, is of the opinion that by the pursuit of art the artist brings himself in to rhythm with the divine art ( i.e. natural objects ). This pursuit does not conduce to his emancipation; neither does it lead him to heaven, it simply results in bringing about refinement ( “ saṃskṛiti ” ) to oneself : “ eteṣāṃ vai devaśilpānāṃ anukṛtiḥ śilpam adhigamyate . . . ātmasankṛtīrbāva śilpāni. Chandomayaṃ vā etair-yajamān ātmanāṃ samskurute ”. ( *Aitereya Brāhmaṇa*, 6. 5. 1 ).

The *Atri Saṃhitā* also analyses culture as refinement of the self. It says that the son of a brāhmin is born a brāhmin. It is only by refinements of the self that he becomes a dvija. The word for refinement is “ saṃskāra ”. This refinement or “ saṃskāra ” is the same as culture. It is in this sense that one has to interpret the following verse 140 of *Atri saṃhitā* :

“ Janmana brāhmano jñeyah samskaratr dvija ucyate ”

Culture, in the sense of refinement is the name of the process, and not of an already accomplished entity. Culture, as seen in both the treatises mentioned above, is not an immutable entity directing and defining the lines, aims, attitudes and ideals of the people concerned. It is in fact a changing process.

## II

It is time now to direct attention to the analyses of culture as found in philosophical works. Unfortunately, very few philosophers have written any systematic treatise on the meaning of culture. People like Nietzsche and Karl Marx have made important remarks about culture. But it is not possible to deduce any coherent account of the *meaning of culture* from these remarks. In India, Prof. N. K. Devaraja has presented a very useful and well-thought out treatise on culture, entitled, the *Philosophy of Culture*. It will be judicious to start with his analysis of the concept of culture. Some of the observations made by Prof. Devaraja resemble, to a great extent in spirit, the classical Hindu treatment of culture as a process, as a refinement of the self. According to him the cultured people are "engaged in activities that contribute to the expansion or enhancement and qualitative improvement or refinement of the self". "The process that constitutes culture", he says, "belongs to this class of activities." (*The Philosophy of Culture*, N. K. Devaraja, p 115). He says in a different context that the ideal life from the viewpoint of a cultured man aims at "the excellence of the personality regarded as an end in itself". (op. cit. p. 114) Thus not only is Prof. Devaraja one with texts like *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* and the *Atri Saṁhitā* in thinking of culture as a process, he also holds similarly that culture stands for refinement of the self rather than any result of such refinement such as art, laws, customs, etc. He very aptly points out that the concepts of civilization and culture are "complex constructs" which are "designed to be explanatory of human behaviour or achievements from definite angles." (*Philosophy of Culture*, p 92) He thus comes very near to conceiving culture as a logical construct although he does not put his views as articulately as one would have expected him to his more detailed analysis of culture runs as follows :

He tries to explain the concept of culture by showing its relationship with the allied concept of civilization with which it is often confused. Civilization in his opinion consists of those products of man's activity which contributes to his security and freedom, with respect to both the physical and the human or social environment. ( Cf. *The Philosophy of Culture*, p 108).

The techniques, goods and institutions which constitute civilization are valued, Prof. Devaraja points out, because they

are conducive to man's freedom and security. Civilization, then, may be regarded as having instrumental value, with the help of which freedom and security may be brought about. The latter would, in that case, be ultimate ends in themselves.

Unlike civilization, Prof. Devaraja continues, culture does not consist of any products of human activity, it rather consists of those activities themselves. And these activities and their manifestations are valued for their own sake (unlike civilization which is instrumental in value) (Cf. op. cit. p 109)

Let me, at this point, take the opportunity of demonstrating the philosopher's peculiar method of analysing the concept of culture about which I spoke earlier. In presenting their arguments about what counts as culture, philosophers are concerned not so much with showing whether their accounts adequately describe a certain situation, but rather with showing that they are logically consistent. Certain anthropologists reject any attempt to equate 'civilization' with 'culture'. The ground simply runs like thus.

People use the term 'civilization' to describe a particular urbanized and materially prosperous state of living, and since 'culture' is not used to describe such a state it is different from civilization (Cf. p 2). When Prof. Devaraja devotes himself to showing that culture must be understood separately from civilization, he is rather concerned with the logical consistency of thinking. He proceeds first with a logical analysis of the concept of culture, which reveals that culture must be understood as a value which is sought for its own sake. Suppose that we then try to equate it with things which make urbanized living possible, things which are necessarily and sufficiently connected with a materially prosperous city-life. None of these things could be said to constitute ends which constitute their own excuse for being. They are rather instrumental ends pursued for the sake of something else. If culture were identified with these things, it would then be an instrumental end. And this will contradict our original notion of culture as an end valued for its own sake. Hence, for the sake of logical consistency, one must admit that the concept of culture and civilization are different (In presenting Prof. Devaraja's arguments I have taken a little liberty in the sense that the arguments may not be present in his writing in this exact order.)

After this brief interlude, let us go back once again to Prof. Devaraja's full analysis of the concept of culture.

Having shown the distinctness of the two concepts of culture and civilization which are often thought to be identical, Prof. Devaraja makes the following remarks :

"Culture is the sum total of the activities whereby a person relates himself to the significant though useless aspects of reality, actual and imagined." (Op. cit. p 110). He goes on to explain that the "activity" concerned is in reality cognition or consciousness. It is this which relates a man to reality. And in order that the consciousness be valid it must, of necessity, be universally sharable. The utility of an object has reference to the need of somebody; yet cultural development has no connection whatsoever with utilitarian ends. Hence the objects of consciousness of a man of culture must transcend utility and must therefore be significant in an impersonal sense. "*Culture, then*", says Prof. Devaraja "*may be defined as consisting in the sharable consciousness of impersonally significant reality.*" (Op. Cit. p. 110).

The scope of the paper will not permit us to make detailed evaluation of Prof. Devaraja's views about culture. That I consider to be a pity, inasmuch as his analysis of the concept of culture indicates real depth of insight and philosophical acumen. It really helps us to dispel many a misconception about culture. Nevertheless his remarks about culture do also raise some questions which need careful consideration.

Let us start with his observation that culture consists of consciousness which relates a man to significant but non-utilitarian aspects of reality. One example of the way the cognition can relate a man to a significant but useless aspect of reality may, perhaps, be a particular experience a man may have while appreciating a beautiful sunset. Now it is doubtful if this particular consciousness of beauty can itself be treated as culture as such. This may undoubtedly be the sign of the cultured frame of mind of a person, but can we, on that account, treat it as culture itself ?

Prof. Devaraja's characterisation of culture as "consisting in the sharable consciousness of impersonally significant reality" also raises some significant problems. Prof. Devaraja lays special emphasis on the point that culture consists in the disinterested pursuit of value that is not immediately relevant to the person

concerned. The value concerned must necessarily be spiritual, rather than material. He quotes the case of speculations contained in the *Republic* of Plato. These speculations, in his opinion, belong to the cultured order for two reasons ; ( 1 ) these speculations are motivated by the impersonal aim of benefitting society; ( ii ) the benefit they seek to offer is spiritual rather than utilitarian.

To my mind such a definition of culture would be too restrictive and narrow. An aesthetic appreciation, for example, may be an exercise in cultural activity, but it need not necessarily in every case be universally sharable. The peculiarity of the appreciation of art objects consists in this that it may sometimes be *singularly subjective*. An art object may sometimes appeal only to one person.<sup>4</sup>

Take again the controversy about the relative merits of the two ideals of Arhat and Bodhisattva, as prevalent in Theravada and Mahāyāna traditions respectively. The Mahāyāna tradition is skeptical about the Arhat ideal in as much as the Arhat, according to it, is a cool, frigid, self-centred egoist, bent upon attaining his own salvation. The altruist Bodhisattva will, on the other hand, even go to the extent of sacrificing his own salvation for the sake of fellow suffering human beings. An Arhat will, on all accounts, be reckoned to be a man belonging to a particular culture. Yet there is no denying the fact that he is inspired, from the very beginning, by a personal motive, viz. the thought of bringing to an end his personal suffering and thereby attaining Nirvāṇa for himself. The spirit of the Arhat, his ideals and mentality, are not universally sharable either. Yet his attitude undoubtedly represents an aspect of a particular culture.

The philosopher's analysis rightly points out the possibility of modification in existing culture patterns, a possibility altogether denied by the social scientists because of their obsessed emphasis on the effect of culture over individuals. The social scientist's exaggerated estimation of the part played by custom prevents him from investigating such phenomena as ideological and political revolutions. Consequently, Prof. Devaraja points out, the latter cannot do justice to the rule of creative and revolutionary thinkers in society. ( Op. cit. p. 96 ) Prof. Devaraja rightly argues that while individuals are mainly moulded by

habit or custom, they also progress generally<sup>5</sup> by abandoning or transcending custom though the creative imagination of a handful revolutionaries. The genius shapes his age no less than the age shapes the genius. ( Op. cit. p. 131 ).

Prof. Devaraja closes his analysis of the meaning of culture with the following remark :

“ To sum up, culture understood as a value stands for the activities that contribute not so much to the maintenance as to the enrichment of life. This enrichment secured chiefly through the expansion of consciousness i. e. through the directing of the mind's contemplative activity on aspects and areas of reality that are impersonally or universally significant and through the formation of adequate attitudes towards those aspects and areas.” ( Op. cit. p 138 )

The other philosophers besides Prof. Devaraja to have made significant remarks about the concept of culture in India is Prof. B.S. Sanyal. In the preface to his treatise *Culture: An Introduction*, Prof. Sanyal, however, asserts that “ the purpose of the treatise is rather social-philosophical ” ( Op. cit. p. vii ). “ Culture ” in Prof. Sanyal's opinion, “ is one word for realization of values in theory and practice. ” ( op. cit., p. 4 ). He gives his own explanation of the terms, “ value ”, “ realization ”, ‘ theory ’, and ‘ practice ’. ‘ Value ’, he contends, is ‘ one word for subject's attitude to object ’. “ Realization, in his opinion, stands for “ the turning of a possible experience into an actual one ”. ‘ Theory ’ and “ practice ” according to him, stand respectively for : ( i ) “ assimilation of object by subject ” and ( ii ) “ subject's getting assimilated into object. ” ( Op. cit. p. 44 ).

“ All cases of realization, of values, ” Prof. Sanyal reiterates “ in theory and practice can be called culture ” ( op. cit. p 44 ).

In my opinion, however, this characterisation of culture suffers from the same defect of taking the manifestations of a particular thing for the thing itself. Realization of values stands rather for the manifestation of culture itself. Take for example the case of IRA prisoners fasting unto death in support of their demand to grant them the special status of political prisoners. They are motivated by certain values and ideals. One of the values is : even to court death if necessary



for the sake of the cause they are fighting for 'Don't give up, even if it means sacrificing your life itself.' Some of the IRA prisoners realize the values they cherish even by courting death. Yet this realization does not itself constitute culture. It can only be said to be a manifestation of the culture which is shaping the lives of the people concerned.

We have made a study in comparison of the concept of culture as analysed by the social scientists on the one hand and philosophers on the other. Our analysis has revealed the merits as well as the limitations of the two sets of analysis. I would like to bring the present discussion to a close by insisting that discussions about culture in both the cases have met with difficulties because of inadequate understanding. The social scientists have generally failed to realize that culture is a logical construct. The idea that it is a complex construct has dawned on the philosophers from time to time. Yet their understanding has not been as precise as one would have wished it to be. As a result, they failed to utilize this idea to the maximum benefit possible.

What then do I exactly mean by the statement that culture is a logical construct? In our analysis of culture we start with certain indubitable facts of immediate experience. These facts consist sometimes of a body of artistic and intellectual work; sometimes of what individuals of certain social groups do, make and think. We might also start with the ostensible morals, laws, customs and habits of certain societies. Left to themselves, these observed entities fail to give adequate explanation of their occurrence and modes of being. We have to construct a certain unobserved entity called 'culture' in order to provide an adequate explanation of these observed phenomena. This complex construct called 'culture' is formulated in terms of relations between simpler and indubitable facts like artistic and intellectual works, laws, customs, habits, thoughts etc. of particular groups. When so formulated in terms of relations between these simpler undeniable entities, there is a decisive justification for this complex entity called 'culture' which is unobserved, and which may, on that account, seem to be of doubtful existence. Yet it is this so-called 'doubtful' which is to constitute an explanation of the indubitable and yet inexplicable phenomena.

## III

Before I draw the present discussion on culture to a close, I would like to absolve myself of certain possible charges of inconsistency. But, before I attempt such an absolution let me first refer to possible demands to clarify some remarks I have made.

I have used such expressions as 'manifestations of culture', 'modes of expression of culture' on page 66. What exactly do I mean by them? Now, by an expression such as 'manifestation' or 'mode of expression' of culture I simply mean, 'that with regard to which a judgment of culture is made'. In other words, 'it is that which is adjudged as bespeaking a particular culture rather than another.' The expression 'manifestation of beauty' perhaps has an analogous sense. By the later expression we mean, at times, 'that with regard to which a judgment of beauty is made'.—

I have, on page 66, talked of culture as a 'non-natural phenomenon'. I possibly also owe my readers an explanation as far as the use of that expression is concerned. I mean that culture is such a phenomenon that it is impossible to equate a judgment regarding that phenomenon with a set of purely factual or descriptive premises. Needless to say that the way I see it, culture is an evaluative concept. In this way, the logic governing it has similarity with that of concepts like good and beauty. Evaluations involving these concepts are not logically equivalent to factual statements relating to them. For example, if one contends that 'good' means nothing but some simple or complex notion, that can be defined in terms of natural properties like red, sweet, pleasant etc., then he is certainly mistaken.

One may point out at this stage that I am being inconsistent. I am maintaining that culture is a complex construct and at the same time I am also suggesting that it is an evaluative concept. Are not logical constructs always objective entities or facts? How can they, in that case, be evaluative? In answer I would like to point out that these questions owe their origin to some confusion, viz. that of thinking that material objects are the paradigm cases of logical constructs. But surely complex constructs are not always material objects. Numbers could be logical constructs out of classes. Meaning of sentences could also be

logical constructs out of meanings of words. And yet neither of these sorts of entities are objective entities. Nor are they, for that matter, bare facts. If logical constructs are not necessarily material objects or objective facts, where then lies the difficulty of conceiving them as values?

One may further ask, at this stage, 'why do you want to insist that culture is a logical construct? what prevents you from equating culture simply with a value? In answer we can say that the reasons concerned are manifold. We cannot equate culture with a value like goodness. The concepts of goodness has a persuasive and commending force; but the concept of culture need not have any such force. Nor can we equate culture with a value like beauty. Beauty is very intimately connected with the visual appreciation of the aesthetically pleasing entities (it need not, for that matter, be equivalent in meaning to visually pleasing sensations). Manifestations of culture may include artistic achievements which are logiclly related to aesthetic appreciation. But culture surely is a much wider notion than that of artistic achievements. There are other reasons also for not treating culture simply as a value concept. But the scope of the paper does not allow us to enumerate all those reasons. All that we can say at this stage is that the concept of culture undoubtedly comprises within its fold the concept of values, but it comprises much more. That is the reason for my reservation about equating culture simply with value and for my insisting that it is a complex construct.

One may point out here that I am not applying Ockham's razor in my discussion of culture. And this is an evidence of a glaring inconsistency in my discourse. One may, for example, ask what else is there to culture besides the so-called 'manifestations' of culture? Why are you reluctant to reduce the former in terms of the latter?

Let me try to answer this by first citing the case of an analogous question and possible replies to it. One may ask: 'What is the need of thinking of beauty as something over and above beautiful objects? Is beauty a transcendent entity subsisting in a realm of its own apart from beautiful objects existing in space and time?' In answer, we can first point out that we can perhaps, in a sense, identify an object with beauty, when we speak of that object as beautiful. Consider for example the expression, 'Isn't she a beauty?' But can we, for that matter, I. P. Q. 6

identify beauty with any particular object? Can we sensibly say 'beauty *is* that face'? 'beauty *is* that flower'? We can sensibly say with regard to a table that 'It is a material thing'. But can we say, 'matter *is* that table'?

Analogously, with regard to certain forms of behaviour, certain artistic and intellectual achievements, certain mores, customs, we can sensibly remark that 'they bespeak a particular culture.' But we perhaps cannot sensibly say, 'Culture *consists of (is)* these behaviour, achievements, mores, values'.

The second point I would like to introduce by way of defending my position is as follows. Whenever we explain one thing in terms of another, the explicandum is of a higher order and of a wider denotation than the explicans. As a result, the explicandum can never be reduced in terms of the explicans. Think again of the logical characteristics of an enquiry and a meta-enquiry. A meta-enquiry is of a higher order than an enquiry. A meta-enquiry presupposes a wider perspective of an enquiry. Consequently, a meta-enquiry can never be reduced in terms of an enquiry.

The relationship between the 'forms of behaviour, forms of artistic and intellectual achievements, forms of norms and customs which bespeak culture' and 'culture', which is logically constructed out of them is the same as the relationship between the explicans and the explicandum. The forms of behaviour, artistic and intellectual achievements etc., are indubitable facts of experience. Yet left to themselves they cannot provide explanation of their particular modes of existence. Their modes of existence is rendered intelligible with the help of a complex construct called 'culture'. And that which explains something else cannot be identified with the latter.

I have a feeling that my remarks by way of clarification of my position, and by way of absolving myself of possible charges have, to a certain extent, been a little sketchy. But the scope of the present paper would not allow me to elaborate my remarks any further than I have done.

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## NOTES

1. With the exception, perhaps, of the investigations of W. H Goodenough. See his *Cultural Anthropology*, pages 36-39 in Dell. H. Hamlyn (ed) *Language in Culture And Society*, Harper, 1964.
2. Cf. Kshiti Mohan Sen's *Bharater Samskriti*.
3. As quoted by Kshiti Mohan Sen in *Bharater Samskriti*.
4. Yet, it is unfortunately this fact that has been neglected by Prof. Devaraja. For, according to him, " when I admire an exquisite statue, or a beautiful painting, I am indulging in a cultural activity, for my admiration can be universally shared," ( op, cit, p 122 )
5. The emphatic way suggested by the word " generally " appears to be not free from objection.

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2. D. H. Hamlyn, *Language in Culture and Society*, Harper, 1964.
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4. P. B. Horton, and C. L. Hunt, *Sociology*.
5. A. L. Kroeber, *Anthropology*.
6. A. L. Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn, *Culture, A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions*, Cambridge, Mass, 1952.
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  4. *Mahābhārata*.
  5. *Parāśara Samhitā*.
  6. *Varāha Purāṇa*

