

Civilization

Meaning and Relationship with Culture

Meaning

Civilization is sum of attainments and characteristics of life in an organised city or state but it has been extended to cover not only social organisation but all other achievements which mark off man from animals.

MacIver quotes that civilization means “ The whole mechanism and organisation which man has devised in his endeavour to control the conditions of his life.”

It includes the systems of his social organisation, the techniques and material instruments like the parliament and Agriculture Prices Commission.

Definitions

“Civilization is a more complex and evolved form of Culture”

Gillin and Gillin

“A culture becomes civilization only when it possesses written language, science, philosophy, a specialised division of labour, a complex technology and political system.”

Green

“ Civilization is a decaying phase of culture, the phase in which culture loses its creative vitality and becomes mechanical and imitative.”

Spengler

Basic Technology and Social Technology

Within the order of Civilization there are two types of technologies: Basic and Social

Basic Technology

1. The basic technology arises as man's control over natural phenomena.
2. It applies scientific laws to serve human needs.
3. It helps us in construction of machines, gadgets, apparatuses and apparels etc to comply with our material needs.

Social Technology: Economic and Political

1. Social Technology comprises of techniques that directed to regulate human actions such as banks, schools and our legal system
2. Economic technology refers to the economic process and relationships between men.
3. Political technology regulates the wide range of human actions.

Culture Versus Civilization: A Glimpse

Civilization

1. It is external and mechanical.
2. It is utilitarian, concerned only with the means.
3. Civilization is what we have.
4. For instance, machines, gadgets, apparatuses and apparels etc

Culture

1. Culture is internal and deals exclusively with the ends.
2. It is organic and final.
3. Culture is what we are.
4. For instance, theatre, art, food, novel, poem etc.

Culture is therefore not a means to an end but it responds to the necessity within us. Culture in this manner represents the antithesis of civilization. Thereby, its necessary to highlight the points that distinguish between them. Following slides will discuss the same.

Civilization: A Quantitative Phenomenon

Culture: Qualitative Phenomenon

Civilization

1. The degree of efficiency of the objects of civilization can be measured.
2. They can be imputed on the scale of superiority and inferiority.
3. For instance, an automobile runs faster than a bullock – cart and an electronic typewriter is better in performance than an ordinary one.

Culture

1. The objects of Culture vary according to quality.
2. These are judged by subjective considerations.
3. For instance, an art piece of Picasso may be a priceless possession for some and at the same time it might be a futile item for

Hence, there is lack of definiteness in the movement of culture as compared to the victorious march of civilization. Sometimes, however, certain cultural artifacts are also considered more beautiful than others. For e.g. the Taj Mahal will always be considered more beautiful than the UNO headquarters in New York but certainly subjectivity also creeps in here.

The products of Civilization are easier to Communicate than those of Culture

1. Since, civilization can be measured quantitatively, it is easier to comprehend and transmit it to others while culture can only be understood by like minded people.
2. We do not inherit culture as we inherit civilization. Culture is acquired by selected group of individuals. Only those persons are able to acquire it we are worthy of it.
3. It is not possible for a new generation to enjoy the cultural achievements of past generation until it makes a special effort to learn and appreciate it. Whereas, the achievements of civilization are always around us to be enjoyed by us as well as by the posterity without any special effort.
4. For instance, a village boy learns easily to operate complicated machines in a factory but finds it difficult to accept the moral standards of the city dwellers.
5. Scientific, social, political and economic means comprising the components of civilization are easily adapted to and transferred from country to country; whereas, it is difficult to adapt oneself to a foreign culture.

Civilization is Progressive but Culture is not

Civilization

1. Civilization always marches ahead, and in the process, it always shows a consistent upward trend. Therefore, change in civilization is unilinear.
2. Civilization ahead's for progressive march unless some natural calamity or catastrophe occurs and destroys.
3. For example, in the case of the ancient Egyptian civilization or the Indus Valley Civilization.

Culture

1. Culture moves slowly and it may become stagnant.
2. Culture does not always march ahead and follows curvilinear pattern in development.
3. It is sometimes retrogressive and sometimes progressive.
4. For example, we can say that a tractor is better than a bullock driven plough but we cannot say that a modern poetry is better than that of a Rabindra Nath Tagore.

Civilization refers to Utilitarian pursuits while Culture does not

- 1. In the utilitarian pursuit of civilization, importance is attached to the ends and to the means by which these ends are achieved. In the case of culture, activity itself becomes the end.**
- 2. Cultural activity is learned in primary, face to face and intimate and personal groups are compared with the activity in civilization which is often produced in large scale organisation, where the role of individual is very limited.**
- 3. Cultural activities do not give us vicarious pleasure as civilisational activities do.**
- 4. For instance, if a father builds a house for his son, the son derives immense pleasure out of it without himself experiencing the efforts involved in building the same.**

Culture is Inward Whereas, Civilization is Outward

- 1. According to Kant, the idea of morality is necessary to culture, which is an inward state. The same has been contrasted with civilization, which is perceived as the matter of outward behaviour.**
- 2. Culture is believed to be an inward condition of the mind and the spirit, not an outward set of circumstances, while civilization is relatively mechanical and external.**

Therefore, from the stated points of differences we can conclude that the two follow different patterns in their expansion and development.

Inter – relation between Culture and Civilization

Culture and civilization, despite being distinct elements, share considerable degree of independence and inter-relationship between two.

Utilitarian objects combine both Cultural and Technological features

Most objects usually have both the features : they are articles of utility as well as cultural items. Most articles of utility embody a cultural value, while cultural elements have a utilitarian or a technological aspect. Many a time, difference between different objects is only a matter of degree. Some artifacts are more utilitarian and less cultural, whereas others are more cultural and less utilitarian.

Technological Objects differ with Regard to Cultural Content

- 1. The degree to which a utilitarian object possesses cultural character varies with the nature of the object and the social milieu which is in which it is produced.**
- 2. Articles of consumption are more attractive than articles of production.**
- 3. In a totalitarian society, production of luxury items may be banned. The longer an artifact continues to be used, the more likely it is to become an object of cultural value.**

Cultural Products are expressed through Technological Requirements.

Technical requirements modify and limit cultural expressions. For example, mediums like language, paintings and gestures are externally used symbols of expression of culture. These means very often modify and limit the scope of cultural expression.

For instance, the translation of the original works of great thinkers into foreign languages often fails to give one the satisfaction of the original blending of meaningful words. In our daily experience, we often find it difficult to give a proper description of the particular event that we have witnessed because of the lack of mastery over the language.

Cultural and Civilization are in constant interaction with one another.

1. Civilization as a vehicle of culture.
2. Civilization as a determinant to cultural activity.
3. Civilization as an environment of culture.

Henceforth, civilization effects culture and vice-versa. There is always an interaction between the two. Both are developing and affecting each other. They are not only interdependent but interwoven. Ultimately, Maclver has rightly said, *“Our Culture is what we are and our civilization is what we use.”*

THANK YOU ...

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