

**LECTURE 005**

**CULTURE AND SOCIETY**

Evolution of civilization and cultures, groups, society, culture, environment and time, Levels of social organization & evolution of various social groups over time, human habitat to be related with culture and various contexts with examples in different eras.

**Objective:** To give an idea about various civilizations and to understand the relationship between culture, social organization and their development in different eras.

**Methodology:**

Evolution of civilization and cultures, groups, society, culture, environment and time,	Visual presentation and Debate & exchange of ideas as groups
Levels of social organization & evolution of various social groups over time, human habitat to be related with culture and various contexts with examples in different eras.	Power point presentation
Examples from different cultural contexts.	Group discussion

**Evolution of civilization and cultures**

Civilization refers to a complex human society, in which people live in groups of settled dwellings comprising cities. Early civilizations developed in many parts of the world, primarily where there was adequate water available.

The causes of the growth and decline of civilizations, and their expansion to a potential world society, are complex. However, civilizations require not only external advances to prosper, but also the maintenance and development of good social and ethical relationships usually grounded in religious and spiritual norms.

**Definition**

The term "civilization" or "civilization" comes from the Latin word civics, meaning "citizen" or "townsman." By the most minimal, literal definition, a "civilization" is a complex society. Anthropologists distinguish civilizations in which many of the people live in cities (and obtain their food from agriculture), from tribal societies, in which people live in small settlements or nomadic groups (and subsist by foraging, hunting, or working small horticultural gardens). When used in this sense, civilization is an exclusive term, applied to some human groups and not others.



sense, civilization is an exclusive term, applied to some human groups and not others.

## SOCIETY, CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

### What characterizes civilization?

An Egyptian farmer using a plow drawn by domesticated animals, two developments in agriculture that started the Neolithic Revolution and led to the first civilizations.

### Culture

- According to E.B. Taylor, culture is the sum total of ideas, beliefs, values, material cultural equipments and non-material aspects which man makes as a member of society. Taylor's theme that culture is a result of human collectivity has been accepted by most anthropologists.
- From this, it follows that culture and society are separable only at the analytical level: at the actual existential level, they can be understood as the two sides of the same coin. Culture, on one hand, is an outcome of society and, on the other hand, society is able to survive and perpetuate itself because of the existence of culture.
- Culture can be conceived as a continuous, cumulative reservoir containing both material and non-material elements that are socially transmitted from generation to generation.
- Culture is continuous because cultural patterns transcend years, reappearing in successive generations. Culture is cumulative because each generation contributes to the reservoir.
  - Culture is what differentiates group or society from the next; different societies have cultures.
  - A culture represents the beliefs and practices of a group, while society represents the people who share those beliefs and practices. Neither society nor culture could exist without the other. Culture and society are intricately related.
  - Culture consists of the beliefs, behaviors, objects, and other characteristics common to the members of a particular group or society. Through culture, people and groups define themselves, conform to society's shared values, and contribute to society.
  - Culture includes many societal aspects: language, customs, values, norms, mores, rules, tools, technologies, products, organizations, and institutions.
  - A culture consists of the "objects" of a society, whereas a society consists of the people who share a common culture. When the terms *culture* and *society* first acquired their current meanings, most people in the world worked and lived in small groups in the same locale.

### Civilization and Culture

Sociologists differentiate culture and civilization as two different levels of phenomena. The concept of civilization was almost equated with highly valued things, such as respect of people for one another, the sanctity of life and high regard for the good, the ethical and the beautiful. In this sense, those who were lacking in these attributes were regarded as barbaric or uncivilized.

Preliterate or primitive people who lived in a state of nature—quite naked, used to eat unbaked animal flesh—were usually termed as barbarians. However, many

## SOCIETY, CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

anthropological studies showed that many preliterate societies had their own values, beliefs, rules, religions and tools, etc.

They made certain changes in the natural order of things which are characteristics of culture, in the modern sense of the term. The use of the term 'civilization' as exhibited above is different from its use in sociological or anthropological sense. Defining civilization Maclver and Page (1962) said, 'by civilization we mean the whole mechanism and organization which man has designed in his endeavour to control the conditions of life'.

Similarly, S.M. Fairchild (1908) argued that it is the higher stage of cultural development characterized by intellectual, aesthetic, technological and spiritual attainment. On the basis of this meaning, he made reference of 'civilized peoples' in contrast to 'uncivilized or non-civilized peoples'.

A few scholars have equated civilization with technology and progress; e.g., Robert Bierstedt (1974) emphasized on sophistication, self-criticism and other awareness as the chief characteristics of civilization. Sociologists do not use the term 'civilization' in the sense stated above because all above views are value-loaded.



### Distinction between Culture and Civilization

1. Culture is an end (values and goals) in itself while civilization is a means (tools and techniques) to an end. Cultural facts like belief, art and literature—prose, poetry or novel, etc., gives direct satisfaction to the reader while equipment's of civilization such as cars, computers, refrigerators, etc., do not give direct satisfaction, until and unless they do not satisfy our wants. Thus, civilization is utilitarian. It just helps in achieving the end.
2. Culture has no value in itself but it is a measurement by which we can value other articles of civilization. We cannot determine the value of culture, i.e., beliefs, norms, ideas, etc., but the value of anything can be determined by its measurement standard. Culture is a measuring rod or weighing balance.
3. Civilization is always advancing but not culture. Cultural facts like dramatic plays or poems may not be necessarily better today than the plays or poems of Shakespeare?
4. Civilization is easily passed without much effort to the next generation but not culture. Cultural facts, e.g., any art or a piece of literature, cannot be learned without some intelligence. It requires a few pains to understand it. Contrary to it, the equipment's of

## SOCIETY, CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

civilization (building, TV, etc.) can easily be inherited without much or any use of energy and intelligence.

5. Civilization may be borrowed without making any change but not culture. Borrowing any cultural fact like any political, economic or social belief requires some necessary alteration to adjust in the new cultural environment while this is not necessary to make any material change in the civilization equipment's such as TV, computer, etc.

6. Culture relates to the inner qualities of society like religion, customs, conventions, etc., while civilization relates to the outer form of society such as TV, radio, fans, etc.

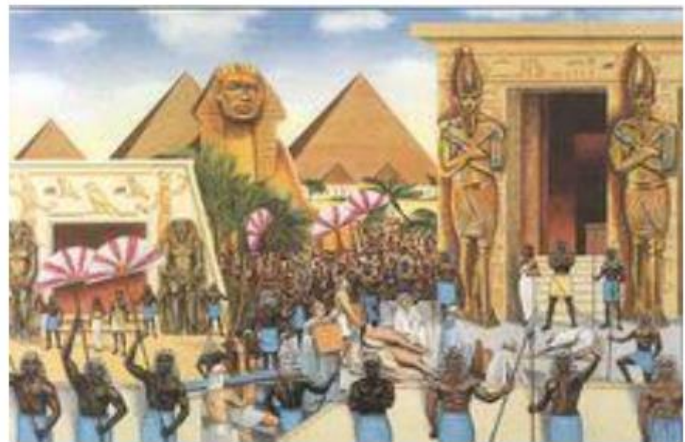
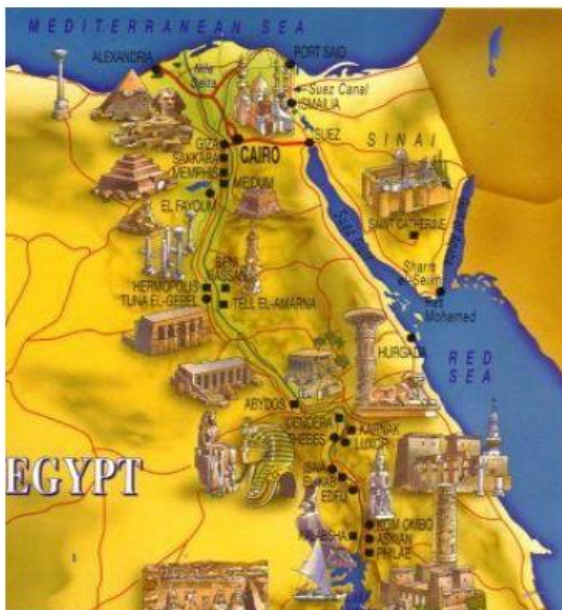
7. Culture is more stable than civilization—cultural change takes place in years or in centuries but civilization changes very rapidly.

8. Variability of cultures may not be accompanied by variability of civilization at different places. Civilization may be similar in variable cultural areas. For instance, there is a great difference between American and Indian cultures but there are many similarities in their civilization equipment's.

9. Culture is a social fact, i.e., creation of the whole society while civilization, i.e., the invention of any equipment may be by a single individual. Any ordinary person can affect any change in the civilization equipment but for any modification or alteration in any cultural fact requires the power and imagination of whole society.

### Egyptian Culture and Civilization

Ancient Egyptian culture flourished between c. 5500 BCE with the rise of technology (as evidenced in the glass-work of faience) and 30 BCE with the death of Cleopatra VII, the last Ptolemaic ruler of Egypt. It is famous today for the great monuments which celebrated the triumphs of the rulers and honored the gods of the land. The culture is often misunderstood as having been obsessed with death but, had this been so, it is unlikely it would have made the significant impression it did on other ancient cultures such as Greece and Rome.



## SOCIETY, CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

Ancient Egyptian civilization has so captured the imagination of scholars and laypeople alike. Just as life arose from the waters, the seeds of civilization were first sown along the banks of the Nile. This mighty river, which flows north from the heart of Africa to the Mediterranean Sea, nourished the growth of the pharaonic kingdom. The long, narrow flood plain was a magnet for life, attracting people, animals and plants to its banks. In pre-dynastic times, nomadic hunters settled in the valley and began to grow crops to supplement their food supply. Seen as a gift from the gods, the annual flooding of the river deposited nutrient rich silt over the land, creating ideal conditions for growing wheat, flax and other crops. The first communal project of this fledgling society was the building of irrigation canals for agricultural purposes.

The sun was a principal deity whose passage across the sky represented the eternal cycle of birth, death and rebirth. The pharaohs were seen as gods, divine representatives on earth who, through rituals, ensured the continuation of life. After death, they became immortal, joining the gods in the afterworld.

The Egyptians also believed that the body and soul were important to human existence, in life and in death. Their funerary practices, such as mummification and burial in tombs, were designed to assist the deceased find their way in the afterworld. The tombs were filled with food, tools, domestic wares, treasures -- all the necessities of life -- to ensure the soul's return to the body so that the deceased would live happily ever after.



The most imposing tombs are the famous pyramids, shaped like the sacred mound where the gods first appeared in the creation story. These were incredibly ambitious projects, the largest structures ever built. Their construction was overseen by highly skilled architects and engineers. Paid laborers moved the massive limestone blocks without the use of wheels, horses or iron tools. The conscripts may have been motivated by a deep faith in the divinity of their leaders and a belief in immortality. Perhaps they thought that their contributions would improve their own prospects at the final judgment in the afterworld.