

# Cultural Studies Is The Ideal Introduction For Progressive Analytical View Of The Social Structures

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## Abstract:‘

Culture' is an umbrella term which encompasses the social behaviour and norms found in human society, as well as the knowledge, beliefs, arts, laws , customs ,capabilities and habits of the individuals. Culture cannot be found if the individual lives in isolation. There should be overlapping, sharing of interests ,participation and mutual appreciation. People as a whole should try to learn and socialize to form and inculcate a better culture in society . Presently to facilitate the ideas and meanings of what culture means in the changing world , the philosophies on culture have become a serious discourse in the academic world , a mandatory part of the syllabus universally for higher studies which is termed as Cultural Studies.

Keyword : culture, academic world, culture studies, popular culture, social media, modern identity, hegemony .

## Introduction

Cultural Studies has become now a movement or a network. It had its own syllabus or degrees in many universities and colleges and also its personal meetings and journals. It activates a multi influence on academic disciplines,particularly on media and communication skills, English studies, linguistics,history and sociology. Though in the history of Cultural Studies, the earliest encounters were considered to be with literary criticism.

The first important moment to facilitate the idea of Cultural Studies was the development of the post-war traditions of social history with their focus on popular culture or the culture of the working class people especially in its political forms. A key concern for cultural studies practitioners is the examination of the forces within and through which socially organized people conduct and participate in the construction of their everyday lives. Cultural studies seeks to understand how meaning is generated, disseminated, contested, bound up with systems of power and control, and produced from the social, political and economic spheres within a particular social formation. The growth of cultural studies is linked to the rise in interest in popular culture in western societies in the 1960s. More 'Leisure' time, widespread television viewing, music and other mass culture especially among the youth brought popular culture to the forefront of critical scrutiny. Since the formation of the centre for contemporary cultural studies at Birmingham University in the 1960s, cultural studies has extended its intellectual base and geographic scope. The tone of early versions of cultural studies was set by young British minds like Richard Hoggart and Raymond Williams. Richard Hoggart was the founder of the Birmingham Centre for contemporary cultural studies, the institutional origin of what has become the global field of cultural studies.

Cultural Studies appeared as a field of study in Great Britain in the 1950s out of left-Leavisism, a form of literary studies named after F.R. Leavis. Leavisism was an attempt to re-disseminate what is now commonly called, after Pierre Bourdieu, 'cultural capital' - though this is not how it saw itself. Leavis wanted to use the educational system to distribute literary knowledge and appreciation more widely. To achieve this, the Leavisites argued for a very restricted canon, discarding modern experimental works like those of James Joyce or Virginia Woolf, for instance. Instead they primarily celebrated works directed towards developing the moral sensibility of readers such as Jane Austen, Alexander Pope or George Eliot - the 'great tradition'. Leavisites fiercely insisted that culture was not simply a leisure activity; reading the great tradition was, rather, a means of forming mature individuals with a concrete and balanced sense of life. And the main threat to this sense of life came from the pleasure offered by so-called 'mass culture'. In this, Leavisism was very much in

tune with what cultural studies has come to call the 'social-democratic power bloc' which dominated post-war Britain. After the war, Britain was administered by a sequence of governments that intervened in the private sector both socially (in areas like health and housing) and culturally (in education and the arts). When the education system expanded radically through the 1950s and 1960s, it turned to Leavisism to form citizens' sensibilities.

Cultural studies developed out of Leavisism through Hoggart and Williams who consciously wrote in the interests of the working class, striving for socialist forms of government, and whose writings were taken up in secondary schools and tertiary colleges soon after they were written. Both themselves came from working-class families; both had worked as teachers in post-compulsory education though, importantly, in workers' education. Thus they experienced Leavisism ambivalently. On the one hand, they accepted that its canonical texts were richer than contemporary so-called 'mass culture' and that culture ought to be measured in terms of its capacity to deepen and widen experiences; on the other, they recognized that Leavisism at worst erased, and at the very least did not fully come into contact with, the communal forms of life into which they had been born. So Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy*, in particular, is a schizophrenic book. Its first half contains a heartfelt evocation of traditional industrial working-class communities, relatively untouched by commercial culture and educational institutions - this half tends towards sociology - while its second half mounts a practical-critical attack on modern mass culture. When Hoggart went on to found the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (henceforth CCCS), a postgraduate and research institute designed to further his work, it began by having to deal with this tension, which it hoped to overcome by bringing social analysis - sociology - into alignment with Leavisite literary criticism.

The history of popular culture as a social concern goes further back to the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the period of the rise and spread of mass literature, boosted by the rise of a working-class readership. Popular culture encompasses the activities and feelings produced as a result of interaction with dominant objects prevalent in a society at a given point of time. The primary driving force behind popular culture is

mass appeal. Heavily influenced in modern times by mass media, this collection of ideas permeates the everyday lives of people in a given society. The word 'popular' was used to designate art, music or other entertainment aimed at masses of 'ordinary' people. Therefore, popular culture has a way of influencing an individual's attitude towards certain topics. The association of popular culture with mass culture leads to a focus on the position of popular culture within a capitalist of economic production. Through this economic lens, popular culture is seen as a set of commodities produced through capitalistic processes driven by a profit motive and sold to consumers.

Popular culture has been critiqued for its being a system of commercialism that privileges products selected and mass-marketed by the upper-class capitalist elite. Social media like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, whatsapp have been a major part of our lives. It is like each of us has an account on a social media platform. These "apps" have controlled our lives considerably. Anyone who is not exposed to such media is considered to be living in the stone-age period. Our accounts and social profiles in these mass-media cultures act like our modern identity. Also games like mobile-legend and Pub-G are very popular commodities. Many countless youths are addicted to this, which in turn affects their health, and psychology. After 'Tik-Tok', 'Likee', making 'reels videos' on Instagram has become immensely popular. It has become a culture to make videos on trendy songs and popular dialogues from current movies. People of all ages, especially 'girls' are really smitten with acting and considering themselves as heroines while making 'reel videos'. There is also a popular culture of "eating broadcast", popularly known as "mukbang". It became popular in South Korea in 2010, and since then has become a global trend. The term ASMR (autonomous sensory meridian response) is closely related with mukbang. People who experience and watch "ASMR shows" claim they receive immense pleasure from watching or listening to everyday habits like whispering, eating, chewing slowly, hair brushing, etc.

Developments in internet technologies have brought a variety of online applications into individuals' lives (eg. Gaming, gambling, sex, shopping, social networking etc) leading to many different formats of gratifications obtained

from these activities. We are familiar with online shoppings through 'Amazon', 'Myntra', 'Shein', 'Club Factory', etc. These 'apps' have earned billions of money through mass culture. Even Korean culture is very popular these days. Korean celebrities, K-pop idols, and their culture are popular globally. People are after their food, fashion, language and cosmetics. Due to their high-demand mass culture, Korea has become a rich and popular nation, in Asia as well as worldwide. Japan is famous for producing "animation" (animated and cartoon movies). Also, modern people are after quantity rather than quality. Everyone tries to buy expensive 'i-phone' (Apple-company-phone), Jimmy Choo heels, Gucci bags, Coco Chanel perfumes, Kylie Cosmetics as well as Huda products. There is a popular trend of buying expensive stuff and creating a 'high image' in society. Also, people around the world have started opening YouTube channels to make 'vlogs' and upload those videos to win subscribers and likes. And for those who have a high number of subscribers, they get money on a monthly basis. Finally, the most important culture in this 'pandemic phase' of covid-19 in present time, is the culture of working from home in online mode, since we are forbidden to step out of the house. Students from nursery to higher secondary levels and college-universities levels have to join online classes. Carrying out our tasks through online mode has become a part of our lives. Since it has become a practice, a lifestyle, it is included in our culture, for now at least.

Hence, the upshot to understanding everyday life through popular culture is that it is not just the social position of a person that shapes their everyday activities but the cultural conditions they operate within too. The cultural conditions each person works within are multiple and overlapping in the complex modern societies. Meanwhile, British academics used Gramsci's concept of hegemony to examine popular culture as a site of contestation or resistance among dominant and subordinate groups. The point of reviewing this term in such depth is to impress upon the fact that 'how we conceptualize popular culture and mass culture and constrains how we study culture'.

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