PART A: ON CULTURE

A.1 Culture Defined and Redefined

A.1.1 An Attempt at defining Culture

If there is any word which has been widely misused during the last few decades, it is the word culture. The intention here is not itemize the faults of the past, but to find out whether the meaning has been grasped in its true perspective. The culture of a society is often assessed in terms of dress the people wear, the automobiles they use, and such other material equipments they possess. But culture has little to do with all these. On the contrary, it signifies something more deep. To be cultural is to be sensitive to the reality. In fact, T.S. Eliot would even describe it in very simple terms "as that which makes life worth living, It is a way of life."\(^1\)

A.1.2 Way of life and Tradition

A lot has been said about Tradition. But without understanding its nuances, all efforts to define it would become futile. Tradition, in simple words, is that which enriches a way

of life because culture is not something that is acquired over night. On the contrary, it, like the perennial river Ganges, has flown from the past to the present with the prospect of flowing into the future. This inheritance from the past is called Tradition. As it flows from the past to the present, it moulds the life of the people and adds lustre to it. In this sense, culture is said to be shaped by Tradition, so much so that culture and tradition are inextricably intertwined.

A.1.3. Definition reviewed

Tradition promotes and enriches the way of life of a people. As the way of life denotes culture, it logically follows that culture is shaped by tradition.

Culture, viewed thus, can be broadly redefined as the way of life of a people crystalised through generations.

Linking culture and tradition, Swami Ranganathananda very aptly defines culture, "as a cumulative effect of inherited tradition."\(^2\)

A.1.4. Aurobindo's Concept of Culture

Aurobindo is of the opinion that in the upkeep of natural harmony of spirit, mind and body lies true happiness.

Viewed in this light, he would say that the yardstick to assess a true culture lies in its discovery of the key to this harmony.

A.1.5. What is the key to achieve this harmony?

It is here that the relationship between culture and values gain relevance.

A.1.6 Way of life and values
A.1.6.1. Value

The term 'value' has many connotations. Social Philosophers like Malinowaski define value as 'that which satisfies human desire.' Mackenzie relates value with pleasure. He considers pleasure as the subjective sign of value. Either way, value signifies human aspirations or ideals that any human being aims at realising. This realization cannot be achieved in a vacuum. Robinson Crusoe cannot be considered to be a virtuous man because he was living in isolation. Sans society, the question of virtue and vice have no significance. That means, values draw their strength and sustenance only in and through society.

Society thus serves as a mirror reflecting the aspirations or ideals and to use a kindred expression 'value', the society breathes. For, individuals are, after all
form the brick and mortar of the society. Nobler, loftier and higher the aspirations or values are of the individuals ennobling the society is. Debased and demoralised the values are, despicable the society becomes. And this brings us to a discussion on the kinds of values.

A.1.6.2. Values - Classification

While some values are 'Time-Bound', that is, temporal and empirical or to use a mundane expression, 'Material', some others are 'Time-Beyond', that is, 'Transcendental' and 'Trans-Empirical' or to employ an oft-repeated expression, 'Spiritual', Temporal values, then, by their very nature are temporary, fleeting, everchanging and extrinsic, in as much as they are instrumental and used as a means to the attainment of something 'Transcendental' values, on the other hand, are permanent, unchanging, eternal and intrinsic. Economic, social and political values can be brought under the first category while aesthetic values can be clubbed under the second one.

A.1.6.3. The nature and consequences of material values and Spiritual Values

a. Material Values

Material values on account of their being temporal, are everchanging. Though very much necessary for men's well
being, they, pursued by themselves and for themselves, tend to produce only negative effects leading to egoism, jealousy and hatred.

b. Spiritual Values

The main difference between material and spiritual value lies in their being extrinsic and intrinsic respectively. Extrinsic value by its nature is instrumental. This difference is expatiated by Wright very aptly and cryptically thus, An Intrinsic value is of worth on its own account whereas an instrumental value is of worth because of its consequence. In other words, while the worth of the material values are judged from its consequences, the values of spiritual values are assessed on their own merit.

Spiritual values, as their very name suggest, are firmly rooted in and stem from the recognition of a basic spiritual element underlying all creation which by its very nature is eternal, unchanging and permanent. That being so, the values such as Truth speaking, Non-violence, Honesty etc., drawing their sustenance from this recognition are also eternal and permanent and tend to produce positive effects such as Love, Altruism etc.
c. Integration of 'Time bound' (Material) and 'Time Beyond' (Spiritual) Values

In the light of man's nature, as a rare blend of Temporal and Spiritual, he is aptly distinguished from the sub-humans by virtue of his ability to look up at the sky too, while the feet are firmly planted on the ground. This only suggests that he stands in need of both Time-bound and Time-Beyond values. That is, in his case, both the Temporal and Transcendental values need to be integrated. Obviously, keeping this necessity in view, the ancient Indian Thinkers structured the values in such a way that the value scheme covered both the Temporal and Transcendental. The two transcendental values viz., the Dharma and Moksha formed, as they were the two banks within which the two temporal values viz., Artha and Kama flowed to enrich the culture of the land.

A1.6.4 Values and Way of life

Values, being closely linked with individuals and society, find their expression in the life style of the people of a society. Like a mirror, the way of life reflects the value that the people of a society upholds. Values in this
sense, act as the determinants of the society and its culture. "Timeless" viz., "Spiritual" values, when pursued with diligence, keeps the culture firm, steady and strong enough to withstand the ravages of time. Obviously, in respect of cultures, the Darwinian dictum of "Struggle for existence and survival of the fittest" holds good to the last word.

A.1.6.5 Culture Re-defined – in terms of values

T.S. Eliot, an eminent modern English poet, recommends a valuational definition of culture.

Starting with the equation that religion is equal to a way of life, "a whole way of life of a people, from birth to grave, from morning to night and even in sleep," which is also equal to culture, as the basic premise, he avers that no culture can appear or develop except in relation to religion, and proceeds to define culture adoringly as "that which makes life worth living."

Similarly, K.M. Munshi defines culture, "as a characteristic way of life inspired by certain fundamental values in which people live. It is the sum total of the


4 Ibid., p.31.
values expressed through art, religion, literature, social institutions and behaviour the overt 'external acts of individuals and mass action inspired by the collective urges.'

Dr. K. Satchitanandamurthy, elucidates this definition in precise terms thus: "Every culture is an attempt (conscious as well as unconscious) to conjointly realise in social life certain fundamental values and at its highest point of development, it attains to some extent a specific type of excellence and upholds a more or less definite ideal of life."

And this leads us to a discussion between 'Living' and 'Non-Living' culture which once again in its turn is determined by its relationship with tradition.

A.1.6.6. The two facets of culture—Non-Living and Living

Tradition signifies ancestry and denotes continuity. In respect of culture, it refers to a way of life. Tradition, as moulding the way of life of a people, is said to play a vital role in the shaping of culture. This then suggests that tradition and cultures are comparable to the obverse and


6 Satchitananda Murthy, K., Dr., The Indian Spirit, Andhara University, Series No.76, 1965, Prefaced.
reverse of the same coin. As the two facets of the same coin, they are inseparable; so there cannot be any culture without its base in tradition. If there is a culture devoid of tradition, it will be like a rivulet without water, a portrait without a shade, with no continuity to fall back upon.

Such a culture, which is bereft of continuity, is branded dead and hence non-living. A culture dead, is like a river dried.

Continuity, on the other hand, by keeping culture alive, lands enhancement and adds beauty to it and also earns it the epithets 'Living and Dynamic'.

A.1.6.7 In Addition to tradition, what are the other factors which keep a culture alive and dynamic?

A culture must have the following characteristics for its survival and continuity. They are,

i. Acceptance
ii. Accommodation and
iii. Assimilation.

i. Acceptance

Acceptance relates to giving equal recognition to all cultures, and at the same time maintaining its basic identity. This acceptance of the best in the other cultures without any reservation naturally ends will accommodation.
ii. Accommodation

What is accepted must be accommodated. This reminds us Mahatma Gandhi's words, to keep the windows of our room open, allow the wind to pass through the rooms but see to it that we are not swept off by the wind.

The natural corollary of acceptance is accommodation. Indian culture, over the centuries has been accommodating all that is best in other cultures, without losing its essential character.

iii. Assimilation

What is accepted and accommodated should be assimilated.

Culture means not only absorbing the best from its own but also from other cultures elsewhere. To understand our own, we must have a complete picture of other cultures. Sadly this is not happening. We ape the western culture such as dressing, smoking, drinking and dancing etc., leaving all the best to the winds.

The reason for this malady, in short, is that our capacity to assimilate modern western culture is not directly proportionate to our assimilation of our own culture.
That is why, it is often said, that we have lost our moorings in our culture and we are not able to take in their culture, eventually not finding a place either here or there. That means, we are in a state of suspended animation.

So we should keep our minds open to receive the best from other cultures; but in the process we should not discard our own.

The basic underlying element in all these 'Three A-s' is the SPIRITUAL value that has gained the strength to face all these hardships.

A.1.6.8 The effect of the 'Three A-S'-Comprehension and Compassion

A true culture must be comprehension and compassionate. Comprehension implies treating the entire human beings as one big family. Śaṅkara explains succinctly as, "Mother is Parvathi (Sakthi) Father is Shiva (Auspiciousness); all those who love Shiva are my kiths and kins and the three worlds are my worlds." In Tamil also we have a similar statement which says, "All places are my places, All of you listen."

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7 Śaṅkara-Annappurā Aṣṭakām-Sl.12.

8 Kaniyan Poongunranar's Statement on "National Integration".
Culture which possesses the said characteristics when emulated will wipe away the maladies that mankind has like violence, egoism, wickedness, exploitation etc. Treating all as the one becomes manifested only through love, compassion and service. Thus compassion and comprehension form the true essence of culture. Comprehension in incomplete without compassion. Both compassion and comprehension are not possible without assimilation.

A.1.6.9 The basis of the THREE 'A-S'- Spiritualism

Recognition of a basic spiritual element underlying all creations, in other words, spiritualism forms the bedrock of the three 'A-S'.

A.1.6.10 Difference in Quantity and not Quality

In so recognising basic spiritual element underlying the entire creation, the differences that we perceive in the world are only Quantitative and not Qualitative. In terms of Quality, everything is basically identical, the differences are just superficial.
A.1.6.11. Relationship between Culture and Philosophy

Culture is a way of life. As such, it should necessarily be based on a view of life, as a way and view are correlative. In other words, culture as a way of life is to be supported by a theoretical aspect of life viz., Philosophy, and a Philosophy should finds its overt expression in the way of life of the people. That means, the one without the other is incomplete.

A.1.6.12 Philosophy and culture – interlinked

To express the same precisely while the aim of philosophy is to provide a comprehensive and coherent view of everything, the aim of culture is to reflect that view.

A.1.6.13 The Question

Now the following question remains to be answered: How does philosophy find its expression in culture and what role does Religion play in this 'link-drama'?
PART B: ON PHILOSOPHY AND ITS LINK WITH RELIGION

B.1.2. THE 'WHY' AND 'WHAT' OF PHILOSOPHY?

B.1.2.1 a. The WHY of Philosophy?

Man - a Unique animal - "MANIMAL"

The one unique feature that distinguishes man from the other forms of creation is his capacity to reflect or think. It is for this reason that man is described as the crown and crest jewel of creation.

Like animals he eats, drinks and procreates but unlike animals he is able to assess the rights and wrongs of his actions, form a society, evolve a form of Government, to live in harmony with his fellow beings. Curiously this reflective capacity has also taught him the great truth that there is a basic divinity or Reality underlying all creations.

Since man, unlike animals possesses, all these capabilities, he is described in various ways as a rational animal, a social animal, a political animal and a spiritual being.

B.1.2.2. The Fundamental problems confronting man:

What were the problems that troubled and are troubling men?

Eversince man attained the power of reflection, he has been confronted with certain fundamental problems relating to himself, the otherselves, his relationship with others and the world outside.
The problems can be enumerated thus:

1. Who am I?
2. From where did I come?
3. To where do I go?
4. What is the world that I see around?
5. How was it created and if it was created who was the creator?
6. Does he really exist?
7. What is the ultimate purpose of human existence?

B.1.2.3. Philosophy - The other name for the search

Since man is endowed with the capacity to reflect, he must have thought of these fundamental problems regarding himself and the universe, ever since he began to reflect.

And this search for an answer to these fundamental problems regarding himself and the universe around him is termed Philosophy.

B.1.2.4 A Persian Couplet

A Persian couplet\(^9\) compares the universe to a manuscript which has no first and last pages. A book sans a beginning and an end makes no sense. So too, a universe, without a before and after, which has puzzled man ever since he

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attained the power of reflection. Though no conclusion has yet been reached on this issue and the mystery remains unsolved, it has not detered man in his search. And the name of this search goes by the name Philosophy.

B.1.2.5. Age of Philosophy - as old as Humanity

It becomes obvious now that the day when the search for an answer to the basic questions regarding himself and universe around him began, marked the birth of Philosophy.

As the date for the birth of man's reflective capacity cannot be assessed, the date for the birth of Philosophy cannot also be fixed up. In other words, if the reflective capacity of man is as old as humanity, the birth of Philosophy also should be as old as humanity.

B.1.2.6 Philosophising has no Limitations

Reflective capacity, which is so unique of man, does not make any distinction between men. It knows no caste, creed, race, religion, nationality or sex. Any biped animal is endowed with the privilege of reflection. As such, Philosophy too can have no limitations. It is in the very nature of man to philosophise, no matter to which denomination he or she belongs.
B.1.2.7 Distinction between commonsense and Scientific Philosophy

Philosophising, being common to everyone, the conclusions that an individual arrives at in response to the fundamental questions that confront him, based on his reflection and experience, when formulated not so logically and scientifically, may go by the name "Common-sense Philosophy". If, conversely, one can give expression to one's conclusions logically and scientifically, then that philosophy can be called "Scientific or Systematic Philosophy."

B.1.2.8 Eastern and Western

Philosophising being a universal phenomenon, man, to whichever hemisphere of the globe he might belongs, has evolved his own philosophy, depending upon the geographical and other factors. Hence the difference between the East and West in their approach to philosophising, the former Subjective and the latter Objective.

B.1.2.9 Origin and Development of Systematic Philosophy in the West and East

In the West, Philosophy is said to have originated in wonder and begun with the Greeks. It was then Greeks who first raised these fundamental questions and sought to find out an answer which provided the foundation for the growth and
development of the later Western Philosophy. Western Philosophy has remained more or less true to the etymological meaning of Philosophy in being essentially an intellectual quest for truth. Thus, in the Western Philosophy, Science and Theology have their roots in Greek thoughts.

Greek Philosophy is generally divided into pre-socratic, Socratic and Post-Socratic. In this division, Socrates is the centre around whom Greek Philosophy revolves.

But one chief characteristic of the Greek Philosophy, whether it is pre-socratic, Socratic or post-socratic, is their insistence upon "THE AUTONOMY OF REASON".

This reason was given a two-fold application.

The application was both theoretical and practical. It was not only used to theorise on and explain the fundamental questions but also employed to lend a practical orientation to the theoretical ideals envisaged. Here we find an integration of theory and practice. It is in this respect that Greek Philosophy is said to be strikingly similar to the Indian Philosophy.

As in India, in Greece also the thinkers lived a philosophic life. We may cite Socrates as an example. In this respect it should be noted that the Greek Philosophy was totally free from religious dogmatism.
Closely following the Greek Philosophy which ended with Aristotle we have neo-platonism. The founder of neo-platonism was Plotinus. He was a metaphysician. He tried to synthesise the Good of Plato, The Spirit of Aristotle and the Universal soul of the Stoics. Like the Greeks, Plotinus also gave importance to reason and gives it a two-fold application.

From neo-platonism Western Philosophy passes into the medieval period which is also called Scholastic period. St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Anselm and other scholastics emphasised the role of the church, to the suprression of reason.

The Philosophy of the middle ages was more theological than philosophical because they were more concerned with the revelation than with reason. St. Thomas Aquinas, in his Summa Theologica says that, "Truth, whatever be its formulation or by whosoever it be spoken, is spoken of by the holy Spirit or God."

What he means is that any doctrine should be accepted only on the basis of revelation. Any doctrine of human origin need not and should not be accepted. That is why eminent

scientist like Copernicus, Galileo etc., were persecuted because their doctrines went against revelation. So we find that in the middle ages reason is subordinated to revelation.

It was against this supremacy of church to the suppression of reason that Bacon, Bruno and later Descartes rose in revolt. Since Descartes was a Mathematician and a Scientist, he wanted to make Philosophy scientific and precise like mathematics. In other words, he wanted to introduce the scientific method in philosophy, with a view to placing reason on a high pedestal. Hence his system was called Rationalism and the systems that came after Descartes only emphasised Reason. Revelation was totally thrown over board.

That was how Philosophy came to be separated from Religion in the West. Philosophy became purely intellectualistic. Theology came to form part of Religion.

b. East

Indian Philosophic tradition also like its Western counterpart is said to have begun in wonder. The vedic philosophy started with wonder and through fear, reached dizzy philosophic heights in the Upanishads. The Vedic Philosophy commenced with theism.
Theism

We have different types of theism such as polytheism, Heno theism and Mono theism. From Mono theism we pass on to Monism and then to Absolutism proclaiming the existence of only Reality, both underlying the world and the individual self.

The Philosophy in the East, particularly Indian Philosophy, has been intensively spiritual. It is inward in that the SELF (ātman) forms its key-note. But, not only is the SELF to be intellectually cognised but should be practically realized as well, so much so that the Indian philosophic systems have come to be called 'Darsana', signifying the importance and necessity for a direct, immediate, actual realisation of truth. The famous great saying Mahāvākya 'Tat tvam Asi' (That thou art) gives in a nut shell the philosophy of the absolutism of Upanishads which emphasises that mere intellectual conception of Brahman will not help us in any way. It is felt that intellectual perception should be brought into the domain of one's experience and form part of one's way of life, which signifies Religion. Hence Indian Philosophy is said to be inextricably intertwined with Religion.
After the Upanishads many systems of Philosophy have made their appearance on Indian soil. Of these some subscribe to the authority of Vedas while some others do not. But there is one common feature among these systems of Indian Philosophy, be they Vedic or Non-vedic. And that is, all of them excepting the Chārvaka insist upon the need to integrate Philosophy and Religion, Theory and Practice.

Obviously, keeping this in view, Buddha said, "Philosophy purifies none; Peace alone does."  

Swamy Vivekananda attributes the integration of Philosophy and Religion as the chief factors for the survival of Indian Culture over so many centuries. In fact he has even prophesised that the day India divorces Philosophy from Religion, its culture will fall to the ground.

This brings us to two chief characteristics of Indian Philosophic tradition:

i. Its basic spiritual attitude and

ii. Its inseparable integration with Religion.

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B.1.2.10 The Common Feature of Eastern and Western Philosophy

Though the approach of the East and West to the fundamental problems differ, in as much as they attack the problems from two opposite view points, there is one common feature and that strikes our attention, and that is to have a synthetic and unified view of the universe, of himself, in relation to others.

B.1.2.11 Can Philosophy be defined?

Now the task of defining philosophy becomes much easy. If the aim of Philosophy is to have a knowledge of everything in its true and proper perspective, then Philosophy also should have as its aim, to view things as a whole, not with the slant of the business man or the club man or the artist or poet or preacher, but to see it as a whole.

What Patrick emphasises here is that one should have a whole view. That means, as Herbert Spencer would say we should have a whole and completely unified knowledge.12

From the above accounts it becomes clear that Philosophy in its true meaning is a search for truth and unity.

In the words of Kant, "Philosophy is the theory or truth, reality or experience taken as an organised whole and so giving rise to general principles which unite the various branches of parts of experience into a coherent unity. Hence Philosophy is the sum of all disciplines."\(^{13}\)

From this definition it is quite obvious why the various disciplines are linked with and considered as branches and parts of this whole namely Philosophy.

This brings us to three important characteristics of Philosophy. They are,

i. Totality,

ii. Generality and

iii. Application

Keeping these characteristics in view Philosophy is defined as theory of a subject matter taken as a whole or organised unity containing principles which bind together the variety of truths and facts leading to a certain harmony.

And Indian Philosophers insist that this harmony should find its fulfilment in one's own inner personal experience which can be accomplished only with the help of religion, taken as a way of life.

PART C: PHILOSOPHY, RELIGION AND CULTURE - THEIR INSEPARABILITY

C.1.3.1. Philosophy and Religion - Relation recapitulated

Philosophy and Religion are closely connected. Many Indian Philosophers have said that a mere intellectual advancement will not help the world in any way. At the same time, Religion must have Philosophy as its prop. Otherwise this would become a mere superstition.

Philosophy as a theory denotes a view of life. Philosophy, when capable of practical orientation, assumes an added charm to itself. Practical application denotes, as its very name indicates, suggests a way of life, which can also otherwise be called Religion. It is obvious that sans a way of life, a view of life is incomplete as it will end in dry intellectualism. That means Philosophy without Religion is a mere abstraction. Similarly a way of life, namely, Religion in the absence of a basic philosophy lands itself in dogmatism and superstition. Religion without Philosophy will be tantamount to a temple without God. In short, one cannot be had without the other.
C.1.3.2 Religion and Culture – Both Ways of Life

In the present day world, a study of Religion and Culture has become a highly specialised inter-disciplinary subjects. It is not wrong to say that our culture is identical with our religion. To understand it properly, we must first know what religion means to the ordinary man in the sub-continent. When we think of Religion a number of things comes to our mind such as worship places, sermons, creeds, rituals and so on. Though they are parts of Religion, they do not constitute the essence of Religion. Indeed some religions do not even have them.

Religion then is not a set of injunctions, creeds, dogmas, or rituals. It is something more. According to Indian Philosophy, the word religion is 'Dharma' which means that which binds every aspect of creation together, the essential tenet of Indian Philosophy being the recognition of a basic spiritual element underlying all creation. In this sense, 'Dharma' that is 'Religion' is a value to be cherished and which every society should uphold as its life breath and which should form the very basis of any culture. Indian culture is the best example that can be cited by way of illustration as in it, any and every cultural expression, like music, dance
and art basically reflects this 'Dharma'. In this sense, Religion is also to be considered a 'way of life' like culture and creates such conditions as would be helpful in the blossoming of the culture of a people.

C.1.3.3 Religion and Culture - Ways of Life - hairline Difference

Religion, as a way of life, denotes the instrument to help an individual to attain perfection, which in its turn finds its expression in the ways of life of the people of that society. Way of life here is used in the sense of an expression or an outlet of that perfection. This clearly shows that there is a hairline difference between culture as a way of life and Religion as a way of life.

C.1.3.4 Religion and Culture - Complimentary and reversible

Though the two appear to be different the two are complimentary and even reversible in that Religion as an instrument cannot be had without culture as an expression of that perfection and Vice versa.
C.1.3.5 Philosophy, Religion and Culture - Link established
- inseparable

The foregoing discussion leads us to conclude that there is an inseparable, unbreakable nexus between Philosophy, Religion and Culture, the first representing a view of life and the latter two signifying ways of life.