

Reviewing Cultural Discourse in Indian Context

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Abstract: In such a rapidly transforming world the classical concept of culture, like all other important crux of debates, too has undergone a surgical, linguistic indeed, makeover and has appeared in a new avatar. It comes therefore extremely pertinent to have a glimpse over this most debated concept in the realm of literature and culture. It is pertinent because contemporary writers have evinced an aversion for the archaic mechanism of culture. In the postmodern dawn the western critics of culture have mustered all their energy and intellect for the incorporation of the wide majority of the populace that have been hitherto forced to be on margins. Elite means a very few where as popular mass means almost all. And their exclusion from the frontiers of discussion will leave the formation of concept incomplete, false and unjust. With such background the present discourse tends to weigh Indian culture at some length while differentiating it with a similar concept civilization. Indian culture, like the world culture, has undergone several phases of transformation; thereby it ought to be seen in its entirety and with the complete context that have been in the background determining the direction and texture of transformation.

Keywords: Culture, civilization, postmodernism, deconstruction, inclusion, salad-bowl, elite, bohemian, peripheral, *sanskriti*, *samskar*, physical, aphysical, spiritual, philosophical, ethical, redemption, diasporas, multiculturalism, ethnic identity,

In the aftermath of theoretical explosion in 1980s the academic world got a privilege to construct or even to deconstruct meanings, definition, scope, nature and boundaries of all important disciplines of Humanities including culture. It is true that culture now defies a unanimous definition but it has certain cardinal tenets, at least in India, of strong family base, guru-shishya tradition, secular outlook, spirituality, acceptance of diversity of faith and belief in the fundamental unity of whole universe. A glorious feature of Indian culture has been sublimation of higher values. It was seldom that old things lost their hold on the minds of the folk; for forms linger on long after the meaning is either lost or forgotten. Mita Biswas opines, "Indian sentiment has been in favour of transmuting the older decaying forms into one more useful, than of casting it away as dead and useless. It believed in conformity, compromise and conciliation of tradition" (17). Such a proposition clearly marks that culture is there and it is as vibrant as it was in past but in a new form, with new meanings. This may vary in West because their concept of culture has entirely been different that too right from the beginning. To begin with one of the most celebrated living critic of West on culture and literature, Terry Eagleton, would be apt as he draws leisurely on the changing frontiers of the concept culture. He says,

"Culture was no longer a description of what one was, but of what one might be or used to be. It was less a name for your own group than for your bohemian dissenters, or as the 19th century drew on, for less sophisticated peoples, living a long way off. For culture is no longer just a description of social existence as it speaks eloquently of a certain kind of society. Our very notion of culture thus rests on a peculiarly modern alienation of the social from the economic meaning and material life. Only in a society whose everyday existence seems drained of values, could culture come to exclude material reproduction: yet only in this way could the concept become a critique of that life" (23).

Eagleton gives a clear indication that culture is no longer an exclusive entity but an inclusive one and has departed long away from the meaning and values ascribed by Arnold and his contemporary savants. Raymond Williams, another eminent critic of culture, adds more flexible dimensions to this concept and puts forth a kind of prophecy to much of Eagleton's ideas,

Culture is the signifying system through which a social order is communicated, reproduced, experienced and explored. It is a standard of perfection, a habit of mind, the arts, general intellectual development, a whole way of life, a signifying system, a structure of feeling, the interrelation of elements in a way of life and everything from economic production and the family to political institutions (110-11).

When culture started to incorporate everything from economic production to political institutes, it also started to be shaped and restructured from angles and sides hitherto ignored on the name of marginal. As a result came the concept of "mass culture or popular culture." Geoffrey Hartman explains it in detail and lucid terms,

We now have camera culture, museum culture, deaf culture, football culture, the culture of dependency, the culture of pain, the culture of amnesia etc. a café culture means not just that people visits cafes but that some people visit them as a way of life, as they presumably do not in the case of their dentists. People who belong to the same place, profession or generation do not thereby form a culture, they do so only when they begin to share speech habits, folk lore, way of proceeding, frames of values, a collective self image (197).

Hartman was not the first critic to dwell upon the plurality of culture but even in the writings of Matthew Arnold, in respect of culture and criticism, the glimpses of viability of cultures other than the 'high' can be extracted. He suggested that culture is no longer a criticism of life, but the critique of a dominant or majority form of life by a peripheral one. Whereas high culture is the ineffectual opposite of politics, culture as identity is the continuation of politics by other means. For criticism culture is benightedly sectarian, whereas for culture criticism is fraudulently disinterested. Criticism is too ethereal for culture and culture too earthbound for criticism. We seem torn between an empty universalism and a blind particularism. If criticism is too unhoused and disembodied, culture is too far, eager for a local habitation. Mass culture was not just an affront to high culture, it sabotaged the whole moral basis of social life, but there was also the role played by the culture in cementing the bonds of nation-state, as well as in providing an increasingly agnostic

ruling class with a suitably edifying alternative to religious faith. Culture is not only what we live by. It is also in great measure what we live for; affection, relationship, memory, kinship, place, community, emotional fulfillment, intellectual enjoyment, a sense of ultimate meaning. These are closer to most of us than charter of human rights on trade treaties (45-46). Graeme Turner in his phenomenal work lays bare his ideas in support of the changing visage of culture. He suggests that a shift has taken place from "high culture: the elite art forms seen to provide the best that has been written, spoken or performed over the ages to popular culture. He further asserts that culture is not artifice and manners, the preserve of Sunday best, rainy afternoons and concert halls. It is the very material of our daily lives, the bricks and mortar of our most common place understandings. In his own words,

What we wear, watch, hear and eat, how we see ourselves in relation to others, the function of everyday activities such as cooking or shopping, all of these have attracted the interest of cultural studies" (173).

The works of Raymond Williams, Richard Hoggart, Stuart Hall and in particular the Birmingham center for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) has established the consideration of popular culture- from the mass media to sport to dance crazes- on an academic and intellectual agenda from which it has been excluded. This exclusion had exacted a great cost; what it regarded as peripheral and meretricious included the most basic and pervasive of social processes, practices and meanings. It is one of the fundamental paradoxes of our social life that when we are at our most natural, our most every day, we are also at our most cultural, that when we are in roles that look the most obvious and given, we are actually in roles that are constructed, learned and far from inevitable. Work in cultural studies has consistently addressed itself to the interrogation of society's structures of domination. Focused particularly on the experience of the working class and more recently, on that of women as locations where the action of oppressive power relations can be examined.

These conjectures from eminent Western critics clearly posits that they don't have distinct realms of civilization and cultural stances and in the present era culture to them is very much civilisational traits which include manners, habits, style and routine. On the name of democratic inclusion of general tastes and palaver, they tend to evade the importance and value of great cultural traditions. Whereas in India, though here too popular is superseding the "high" or the ancient culture, culture has been strongly rooted and it is held very distinctly from civilisation. Thereby a consideration would be given to both the views for an inclusive understanding of culture. And both these views would go hand in hand and not in separate sections. In one of his critical work Professor Ramsajan Pandey states that addition is the central job of human consciousness and it resists all adversities, tall or tiny. With this strong and irrepressible avidity man invented thousands of ideas and instruments for a better living. He also formulated several cultural values to live orderly and in harmony with this vast universe including divinity. Clad in these values and contented to the core he proceeds on the path of humanity. It

implies that man develops his brain and brawn with certain values and after developing and refining himself, he involves in the progress and promotion of his society and nation, it is these values and practices which are denominated as culture (1). Etymologically *sanskriti*, the Indian synom to word culture, means values for modesty, cleansing, refinement and above all civility in society. On the contrary in the West the word culture is derived from the Latin term 'Coler' and 'Cultura' which means cultivation. Cultivation again is a process of shaping, trimming, tilling and converting the rough piece of land into a fertile piece of land for agrarian purposes.

Thus we see culture in Indian context means a refinement of human brain and brawn whereas in West it is associated with the physical cultivation of the ground. The intellectual and social development of human beings and the preparation of unused land for agricultural purposes seem to be alike. Both the process intend to direct human life towards betterment. Culture is a determiner of a usual harmonious development of the inborn human tendencies, potential power and a refined combination of it. Boas, an eminent anthropologist, explains the association of word culture to 'colere' by saying that the farmers started praying an invisible force of the sky to protect their crops from climatic turbulences and upheavals. These prayers were based on certain pleasing activities which later on developed into rituals. These rituals, in a phase of development, were consigned as culture. Even the dictionary connotation of the word culture or *sanskriti* displays a variety from refinement, polishness, cleansing, preparation, formation of hallowing cause, creation to cultivation, purification by scriptural ceremonies, training and developing mind, tastes and manners etc. in this regard the Hindi word *sanskriti* is close to *samskar* which orient human beings towards adoration with culture these *samskar* are not only important for purification but also for determining a clean development of the entire society.

A few definition of the word culture in Indian literature, right from the Vedas, may be used for deriving a clear psychological map of the concept culture. *Yajurveda* defines culture as a power that enable human beings with the values of humanity. Tagore ascribes culture to intellectualism. Rahul Sankrityayan illustrates culture with some detail and remarks:

“A generation comes and leaves certain traits in ideas, thinking, liking-disliking, art-music, food-clothing or in spiritual pattern for the coming posterity. The succession of generations continues one after another and each of them leaves certain marks on the coming one. It is these leftover traits that constitute culture” (3).

Rajgopalchari confines culture to the best thoughts, ideas and actions of the best and illustrious personalities of a nation. Ramdhari Singh Dinkar, the once poet laureate, appears to be more appropriate with his enlarged vision of culture when he says, “culture is our way of life and this way of life is not determined by an individual in one day but it is a cumulative effect of centuries in which we come and depart” (55). Culture in the West, as stated earlier, in its earlier phases was limited to peasantry and as late as in seventeenth century it was ascribed a new meaning by the famous Essayist Francis Bacon. He said that culture is “best understood

intensively as humanity's effort to assert its inner independent being" (358). For some time in West culture was supposed to be equal with civilisation which consisted not only of men and women but of their beliefs, customs, assumptions, living styles, manners and achievements in literature, Science, art, polity, economical development etc. Edward Burnett remarks:

"Culture or civilisation, taken in its widest ethnographic sense is that complex whole includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (113-14).

Raymond Williams converts the term culture in more secular flexibility by saying that "there are no masses, there are only ways of seeing people as masses" (76). A brief analysis of Indian and Western concept of culture does unveil some parallels and some contradictions inherent within them. Among the parallels, the first and foremost is that culture is not only a legislative agency but an identification of an entire community too. The several dimensions that emerge from these definitions of culture are physical, ideological and at times a congruous mixture of both. By physical it means our habits of eating, living and clothing, on the other hand by ideological it means solely experiential. Actually culture can neither be physical nor experiential only but a congruous blend of both. It is neither the internal nor the external only. In a sense culture is a confluence of an internal with the external, of empirical with the ideological and of professed with the practiced reality of the human world. Culture thus is a large concept with several components like society, religion, spirituality, art etc and if it is to be discussed, it ought to be discussed in its entirety and not in fragments. Fragmentary discussions will fetch only dangerous effects leading to illusion, falsehood and to incomplete knowledge of a society or nation. Here some propositions may be made regarding culture but with a clear cognizance that in reality culture may move beyond any such boundaries:

1. Culture is a condition of perfect refinement of brain and brawn.
2. Culture is a systematic and legislative agency to live life in order in this sublunary world as well as it also paves the way for a cozy celestial life hereafter.
3. The orientation of culture is always towards sublimation as it is not meant, ever, for any deterioration.
4. Culture is an incessant flow of life, always dynamic hence changeable. In the context of a state it has to assume physical attributes and is shaped by the need of the concerned country. Even that physical attribution too is meant for a higher and nobler life of its people. It has never been static and prone to changes and modifications. Thus culture is a breeder of life and life enhancing values.

Having reached to these perceivable conclusions on culture it is important to understand the differences and similarities between culture and civilisations. Indian thinkers and writers have taken it as two different but related aspects of human life. Ramdhari Singh Dinkar writes, in his phenomenal work *Sanskriti Ke Char Adhyay*, "civilisation tells what we

have while culture tells willingly what we are. Culture is greater than civilisation and it is integral within the civilisation as much as butter is integral with milk and fragrance with flower." Civilisation aims at the fulfillment of our external requirement with physical growth while culture is the expression of our inherent internal need that unleash immense satisfaction. Bhagwatsharan Upadhyay opines on culture and civilisation that "civilisation is a victorious march of the physical development while culture is a world of thoughts, beliefs, interests, art and ideals."

Thus we see that both are different in nature but inextricably related and together sing the saga of human history. Both are the result of creative acts of human species. When these actions intend towards useful purposes it gives birth to civilisation and when it moves to stir our cognizance it gives birth to culture. The betterment of human life depends on two fold factors physical and spiritual. The physical attributes are symbol of achievements made in civilisation, as the numerous inventions, advancements and worldly transactions. The inner or spiritual attribute is concerned with his soul, intelligence and artistic culture. Civilisation, thus, is the indicator of our external or physical façade in the saga of human evolution while culture is that of inner or spiritual (14). To concretize it we may develop certain crucial points to decipher the minute but inevitable differences between the two:

1. Culture is internal or intellectual while civilisation is physical or external.
2. Civilisation is shaped by our living standards, dressing physical developments and assets, culture is made by our beliefs, religious practices, philosophy and mortality coming down to us from centuries.
3. Civilisation can be assumed according to convenience and in no time while culture is indoctrinated in long time and hard to twist.
4. Culture is wider than civilisation and contains it within it while civilisation can't keep culture within.
5. In civilisation man is governed by law but in culture man is above all law.
6. Civilisation may be geographically broader but culture in its microcosmic form varies from country to country thus enjoys variety. It develops in accordance with the locale, people and need.

On the basis of these cardinal points it may be presumed that culture and civilisation are inseparable from each other. As without body devotion can't be attained similarly without civilisation to attain culture is a far cry. Culture does have certain components that remain with it perpetually and are indifferent to the upheaval of time. These components may be classified between two: A) Physical components and B) Aphysical Components:

- A) **Physical Components:** Civilisation is a special cultural attribute and an expression of it. It is the physical composition of culture and if the entirety of culture is to be understood, it ought to be seen in every aspect of the concerned land viz eatables, dress, living manners, ethics, family system, rules and regulations, festivals and celebrations, ceremonies and rituals, caste and class system, education, agriculture and trade, import-

export, warfare etc. Precisely social consciousness, economical surroundings, political structure and the external form of religion are the physical components of culture.

B) **Aphysical Components:** It is the aphysical visage of culture that are otherwise called the intellectual, the spiritual, the invisible and the internal side. It incorporates devotion, faith, philosophy, aesthetics and ideologies. The chief and constant components of culture may be marked as below;

1. Social structure or society
2. Philosophy
3. Spirituality
4. Politics
5. Economics
6. Aestheticism
7. Ethics
8. Language

1. **Society:** Ralph Linton, an eminent thinker, opined that one of the biggest need of man as an individual is that people must express friendly gestures towards him. The birth of human society was the result of this sympathetic temperament of human beings. Every individual unit of man shape and construct the structure of unit. Men's interests, thoughts, beliefs, policies, living style and standards determine the shape, texture and structure of society. In this way the action, behavior, insight and philosophy of individual being is the action, insight and philosophy of the society too. Society, though, is one with people of several communities, religion and several tastes. To realise the unity in a diverse society one may say that people all over the world fulfill their common need with different styles. For example hunger is a common trait of human beings and people of different tastes take different variety of food to satiate their hunger. Action may vary but the end is one. So externally society, especially in the Indian context, may appear of diverse in language, religion, customs, eatings and dressing but internally it is one and this oneness is confirmed by culture. Man is the nucleus of society and culture. Society and culture both assume its value and context from human beings and culture is preserved and perpetrated by social systems.
2. **Philosophy:** The Indian *darshan* is broader and deeper than its English synonym Philosophy. Etymologically *darshan* means to perceive the essential truth beyond the illusory veneer of physical elements. It is a diagnosis of truth and it is diagnosed with logic and reason. Human being experiences two different dimensions of knowledge---the enlightenment of existing world and the ideal world that ought to be. In other words what the world is and what it should be. But both should not be seen as desperate as the 'should be' is inherent in the 'is' and vice-versa. One looks for alteration when the existing system doesn't cater to all the aspirations and one is compelled to seek for more space, flexibility and scope. That's why the Indian seers and philosophers developed different schools of Mimansa, Ethics and experiential matters for deciphering the real

meanings of life. Acharya Devraj has remarked that “Philosophy is an attempt towards the analysis, evaluation and explanation of the cultural heritage of a nation” (258).

3. **Spirituality:** Spiritualism is that eternal essence of our well being that always check our evil spirits. It constantly convinces us that there is an eternal moral system to keep the life on earth running and it generates hopes in adverse times that all phases of adversity or even prosperity are temporary bouts of time and would pass over soon. The main components of spiritualism are religiosity, mythological ideas and devotion. In Indian society religion is attached with prime importance and religion is not ritualistic in its essence but certain rules to live life nobly. Obeisance to these rules leads society and human beings towards progress and welfare. By abiding to these religious precepts one can attain peace and prosperity and society would enjoy equivalence, harmony and peace.

Indian mythology is the backbone of Indian culture and through it all the written and unwritten precepts of Indian society are generated. The belief in incarnation, veneration towards the power of nature and fear of some ominous spirits has been germinated by mythologies. Spiritualism, as it is generally understood, is not solely sticking to ritualistic performances but it expects conformity to the age old concept of four *purusharths*—*dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksha*. Devotion is one mean to attain the final goal of *moksha*. The Indian thinkers have suggested three ways to attain the final liberation: *gyanyoga*, *bhaktiyoga* and *karmyoga*. In all these three means man is the most important entity and is the only means to execute the pursuit of attainment. *Gyanyoga* suggests that man itself is the divine entity alone and there is no other spirit. *Bhaktiyoga* suggests human being to dedicate all their actions to God with least or no consideration of its fruit. Somewhat similar is the provision of *karmyoga* too. Act according to the need of time and context. It is the divine message of Gita also. Life can't be dynamic without action, but action to be done must be right, the right action is always meant for the betterment of individual as well as that of state. Thereby it may be said that spiritualism is helpful in perpetuating the progressive culture of the country.

4. **Politics:** The importance of politics as the visible asset of culture is beyond doubt and it has the capability of shaping civilisational components rapidly and the mentality of individual beings gradually. The power of the state is the biggest contribution of politics to society which at times make the masses dance to its tune willy-nilly. The power of one political group can be resisted by only a second parallel or political group or by an assetless hermit who can flout the entire system and live neutrally. At times it annihilates the opposing current and thereby likes to stand alone and atop. The power of politics reign supreme and even the illiterate understands it easily. If politics is adamant on destroying the opposite pole, it destroys not only physically but internally and intellectually too.
5. **Economics:** the material aspect of human society has been

supported and accepted by all from prince to pauper, from worldly to saintly people. It is restricted only when it is in surplus as mere accumulation breeds many other social evils. If it is governed by a virtuous soul it determines an overall development of the entire state. But it spoils the harmony of the state if it is in the grip of rapacious persons. Economics too is a part of the visible assets of culture and is one of the legislator and caretaker of religion.

6. **Aestheticism:** Aestheticism is universally the best asset of all earthly culture and in its cardinal feature it evokes admiration for beauty. Beauty of the external, ranging from visible nature to invisible divinity and beauty of the internal that assumes the shape of various art forms. Actually aesthetic values are must for a congruous state of a culture as it provides opportunity for envisaging the perfect and the pleasing. It fills and at times amends the gap and amiss of the physical world. Beauty has its various forms and is found from the largeness of the Himalayas to the smallest mole on the chin of a woman, from the sweat ridden face of a laborious face peasant to the panache of a Prince on a hunt. Beauty touches all and sundry and its necessity is indescribable. It distinguishes a culture and is distinguished by it. It establishes a deep relation between man and nature and both are nourished by it. It can generate sympathy and pride together for a roadside working woman if described in poetical terms.
7. **Ethics:** Ethics play an inevitable role in Indian society and culture and it incorporates discussion of truth, logic, welfare and moral laws for a healthy society. It is as mandatory for life as food for body and it enlists all the maximum extents of human actions and desires. In our country two ways of ethics have been propagated by the sages---1. Action that carries forward on the path of truth and justice. 2. Modesty and noble behavior that is valuable, imitable, noble and honourable for the self vis-à-vis the society. Thereby ethics clearly exhibits the progressive and developing way of a society and state. The first Indian Nobel laureate Ravindra Nath Tagore has said that the moral cognizance of an individual enables him to realise that soul retains its essence despite the fleeting passage of time and that it destroys its existence if bound by selfishness and narcissism. The much celebrated script of Manusmriti ascribes ten virtues as ten cardinal ethics for a happy and religious life of the entire state. These ten ethics are patience, forgiveness, celibacy, conscientiousness, truthfulness, cleanliness, stoicism, learning, composure and rightful action. The rightful action ensures liberation from the bondage of life and death circle and the contrary action paves the way towards hell. Besides these ten cardinal ethics nonviolence and control over the senses are other virtues promoted by ethics. It is virtues that mark the highest stage of personality and the prime purpose of ethics is to encourage virtuous life. Ethics is not only precepts but an ideal practice too and it is by this practiced and professed ethics that one could know the cultural richness of a state.
8. **Language:** Language expresses whatever is there within and this expression is a marker of culture. Language expresses the innermost

thoughts, emotions, observation and imagination of human beings and contributes towards a logical understanding of the world. It signifies the intellectual and emotional level of the speaker and consequently of the society and nation. Language too is shaped and evolved by the cultural heritage of the nation. Language is the most valuable assets of the culture and the words which strike most are those loaded with cultural history. Therefore linguistic structure too is our important component of cultural structure. It is important also for it is the carrier of music and literature which distinguishes our culture from another.

Indian Culture (A Cumulative Analysis):

Having surveyed the different components of culture it is now understandable that Indian culture with its immense variety in language, religion, dressing and custom is internally one and united whole. Language of two states may vary but what they speak and sing is more or less similar. One can hardly find any difference in strokes played by a North or South Indian cricketer when playing for the nation. All the four sides East, West, North and South are different in Geography, language, religion, beliefs, practices, customs and eating habits but internally they are all tied by the same and one cultural thread that eventually culminates in one common wish i.e. to secure liberation. India may be a land of 'million mutinies' but these mutinies are not self destructive, rather progressive. Mutinies develop for securing space, right and living noble and not for segregation. Recently the country is divided in some more states and union territories but people living in these boundaries share more or less one cultural hue and one way of life. Amartya Sen, while analysing Satyajit Ray's skilful craft of cinema, remarks that in "Ray's films we see explorations of at least three general themes on culture and their interrelations; the importance of distinctions between local cultures and their respective individualities, the necessity to understand the deeply heterogeneous character of each local culture (even that of a community) and the great need for inter-cultural communication while recognizing the difficulties of such intercourse" (121). Sen argues further that Ray insists on retaining the real cultural features of the society that he portrays his view of India- indeed, even of Bengal-recognises a complex reality, with immense heterogeneity at every level. It is not the picture of a stylized East meeting a stereotypical West, the stock in trade of so many recent cultural writings critical of Westernization and modernity. Ray points out that the people who inhabit his films are both complicated and extremely diverse:

"Take a single province: Bengal. Or better take the single city of Calcutta where I live and work. Accents here vary between one neighborhood and another. Every educated Bengali peppers his native speech with a sprinkling of English words and phrases. Dress is not standardized. Although women generally prefer the sari, men wear clothes which reflect the style of the thirteenth century or conform to the directives of the latest Esquire. The contrast between the rich and the poor is proverbial. Teenagers do the twist and drink coke, while the devout Brahmin takes a dip in the Ganges and chants his mantras to the rising Sun" (129).

Some of the main traits of Indian culture may be paraphrased as below but with the admission that these are only Author's view and ought not to be considered as complete,

1. Spiritualism, even in its most fragmentary state, is the first desirable end of Indian life. It is the eternal distinction of Indian culture. People may disbelieve in idol worshipping but from eminent scientists to athletes, from artists to laborers, from prince to pauper everyone believes in the existence of God. Their life may have blemishes but it is also thronged with fear for doing wrong.
2. Indian culture is marked with inclusion even of external invaders and that's why it is a country of scores of religion and community. It bears up with all paradoxes and uses it for the development of the nation. It does not believe in the apparent contraries.
3. Emotional entanglement is the highest distinction of Indian culture. The bond of love not only within the human society but with nature also is the evident message of our culture to the world. One of the eminent spiritual leader Sane Guru ji says, "I extend centuries of bowing to that great Indian culture that instructs to love the mobile and the constant in our nature alike that establishes magnanimity as the most praised virtue and which sets up the aim of loving the entire world as one's home, '*vasudhev kutumbkam*'" (206).
4. Indian culture lives with the concept of rebirth and all the scripts and sages are of the opinion that our present life is shaped and affected by our deeds of previous life.
5. Our culture values the unity of the entire universe and all its species. It believes in the betterment of the entire universe and all communities. Vivekanand says that the world, not we, is greater and we must search the world by our services. In doing so we also uplift ourselves.
6. Four stages of Indian human life—*brahmacharya*, *grihastha*, *vanprastha* and *sanyas* and the sixteen rituals (*samskar*) are meant to live a harmonious and balanced life. These rituals might have lost many of its meanings but are still practiced and believed in our society. Distortion of its physical form does not mean that it has lost its values because cultural values are never dead or futile; it is only our use and misinterpretation that are improper and wrong.

Culture and Literature: Much has been said about the inextricable relation between literature and culture but the writer wishes to add that the relation between these two components of a nation's life is not just reciprocal but inter and intra operational. Literature is believed to mirror society, society which is nothing in itself but the virtue of sociability is ascribed to society by culture and this culture again is preserved and projected by literature. Literature of and for a nation is constructed by somewhat similar components of culture. One can perceive easily that the cultural turbulences in our country have affected the literature of our country too. From God centric to monarchy and from monarchy to virtuous men and eventually from virtuous men to common men, literature is trying to reach the furthest and to the visible. And in such a pursuit those who are writing from outside the country have failed to weigh the reality and entirety of Indian culture. Their projection of Indian culture is incomplete and partial. Their writing skills have won

international accolade but the content and subject matter of their books have to be cautiously weighed. To be weighed not for outright rejection but to fill up the blanks and to add what is left by these diasporic writers. And it is to this art of criticism the present book is committed.

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