

# INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY GUWAHATI

## NPTEL

### NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE An initiative of MHRD

#### Ecology and Society

**Dr. Ngamjahao Kipgen**  
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences  
IIT Guwahati

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**Ngamjahao Kipgen**  
HSS.IITG

Well in this lecture we would be looking at the section on the meanings of culture and the different forms of society how society has evolved in terms of their economic uses so in a sense we would be looking at the few stages of society in respect to their economic perspective and we would also be looking at what ecological what cultural ecology is now moving on we will try to first look at what this concept of culture is the concept of culture.

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As a way of life can be broadly categorized into a few sections the first one being behaviors beliefs and meanings now what is behavior it is an attitude or ways of life which has been learned by an individual right from his childhood days and it's a never ending processes so this learners behavior which an individual cultivate in his life in essence becomes part of the innate or personal identity of an individual.

Now here can be different ways of expressing one's behavior maybe it can expressed in different circumstances for instance if somebody dies so there is an occasion where the mourning is being done so that also becomes part of the social behavior of an individual or maybe an individual to some extent draws the boundary how to act in a particular social environment in the public how he acts in his private domestic life will be different from what an individual actually does act in the public domain.

Now all these are in essence being influenced by the way an individual and through his socialization process and secondly belief what is belief it is a sum total of what an individual's practices through the homeland values of his or her particular society and this becomes part of the tradition and it is more or less being carried on through different stages of life and usually beliefs are expressed in a very of external or outward manner through practices.

Now and an individual also tries to express certain meanings for instance a behavior has some kind of attempt or edit meanings to it where society in a sense Maxims of his behaviors or actions and the second section of cultural expression of culture as a way of life is the material the material aspect which is also popularly known as material culture there are sort of objects which are part of a human society which are being valued and with health.

Which has a lot of functional values it could be inters of a position for instance the kind of value with different societies attached values to it might not be same now for instance the if we compare the Western society and some of the traditional societies the manner in which how meanings or status are being perceived difference for instance in a hunting society for example killing an animal is in essence accorded.

A very high status but then that might not be similarly the case with other societies so it depend on different forms of societies how do we express and make sense of the actions which we are engaged into now it can be mental social products and it goes on now some of the characteristics of what culture is will be looked at for instance what is shared and integrated because unless the members of the society have shared meanings to or certain things.

It cannot be considered as culture because it is jointly integrated into their way of life so these are in some sense part of the characteristics of that particular culture and many of these culture practices values all these things as I discussed it's not something which is a natural process rather it is something which is learned which over and again depending on the kind of stages of life they have learnt for example.

If you take the youth dormitory system which is prevalent in many tribal societies this youth dormitory system is him to be a center of learning or maybe a center of Education much before the coming of this modern education now in that youth dormitory what those youngsters normally do they are being trained or the values the traditions the beliefs all these are being impacted by the senior members of the society to the young ones.

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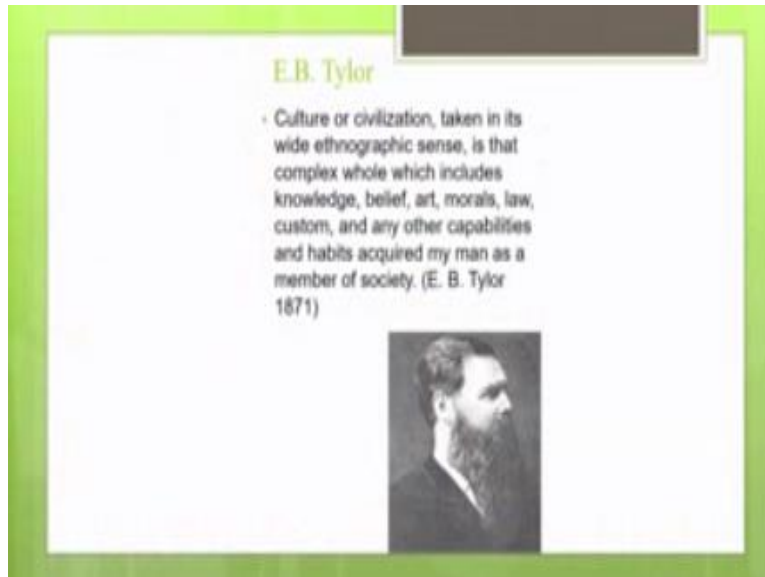
So that they become a responsible adult in their future life now culture can be also symbolic and related now what is symbol is something with this we have usually embedded meanings attached to it now it can be a material and non material for instance there can be symbols which have adequate meaning to a particular society now it can be in terms of objects or it can be in terms of a verbal expression or even a facial expression now a Maori Maori people when they greet they hold tightly and then try to touch their forehead to the others

So this might sound or appears to be quite unnatural to an outsider who does not belong to a Maori community but to them it is assigned of greeting sort of showing a real affection to someone now culture is also adaptive and dynamic as we all know human society evolves over a period of time and culture itself by itself is not static it is ongoing and it evolved and it adapts to different kind of changes or maybe if we try to relate with the presence of climate change certain communities might have a different adaptive mechanism in order to adjust.

With the environment which they have lived on or the ecological needs which they have occupied now this particular concept called as monsoon tourism and cultural relativism and critical culture relate can also be seen as part of a cultural community now usually a particular cultural group or an ethnic group normally have this is being the not really guided but they have this ethnocentric feeling or they have this different perceptions about themselves and the others that is that questions of being we and the other insiders and Outsiders.


Those feelings which have been imbibed or rather that belongingness didn't in essence inculcate this add notion present which means you tend to have a form a stereotype again and outsiders now therefore anthropologists and sociologists are engaged into learning different societies their modes of behavior believes cultural practices or the sort of ways of life because through this engagement they are able to make sense of what actually is the belief and behavior of those societies.

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E.B. Tylor

- Culture or civilization, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. (E. B. Tylor 1871)



Now this is perhaps that there are a lot of definitions on what culture is but I am just trying to give highlights from EBT is considered to be one of the foremost in giving this definition now what Tyler says is cultural civilization taken in its wide ethnographic sense is that complex hold which includes knowledge belief art morals law custom and other capabilities and habits which are accused by men as a member of society.

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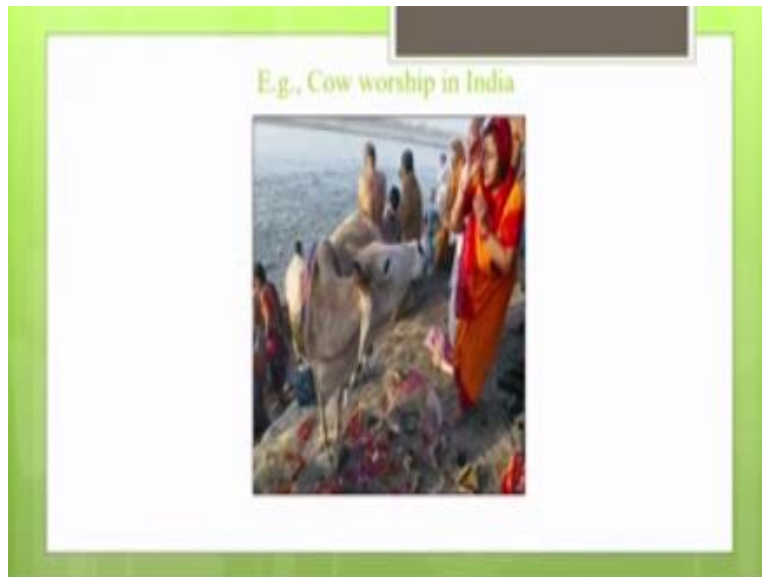
**Clifford Geertz (1957)**

- Culture is the framework of beliefs, expressive symbols, and values in terms of which individuals define their feelings and make their judgments" (Clifford Geertz, 'Ritual and Social Change: A Javanese Example' *American Anthropologist* 59:32-54).

The slide features two small images at the bottom: on the left, a portrait of Clifford Geertz, an elderly man with glasses and a beard; on the right, a photograph of a colorful cockfight in progress, showing several roosters in a dirt arena with spectators in the background.

Now this makes complete sense of what culture is as we had discussed in the preceding slide now Clifford Geertz also gives another explanation about what culture is to him culture is the framework of beliefs expressive symbols and values in terms of which individuals define their feelings and make their judgments these are the sources where I got this definition now if you look at this in diversifying their feelings and make their judgments normally we tend to conceive certain characteristics of a different society may not be based on the rationality.

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But those are merely based on sort of stereotyping or maybe much before we come into contact with those other communities of societies we have that kind of judgment depending on the kind of beliefs and practices with an individual health in this particular community now on the right hand side there is this cockfighting which in essence is again a culture practices which is widely done in the some of the individuals communities.

Now I give an example of in the Indian context how cow is considered to be a secret animal because again these are part of the culture belief of Hindu community now may not necessarily that this cow is sacred toothier community right now this sort of practices wherein certain animals are a given sort of a sacred image is largely byproduct of a cultural practices which is prevalent in different communities

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Now what then is the culture in essence can be understood as the system of sheer ideas and meanings explicit and implicit which people used to interpreter Macon's of the world and which serves to pattern there that under behavior now again this in essence completely tries to make sense of how a community tends to make sense of certain share ideas and depending on that share ideas and meanings which can be explicit and implicit.

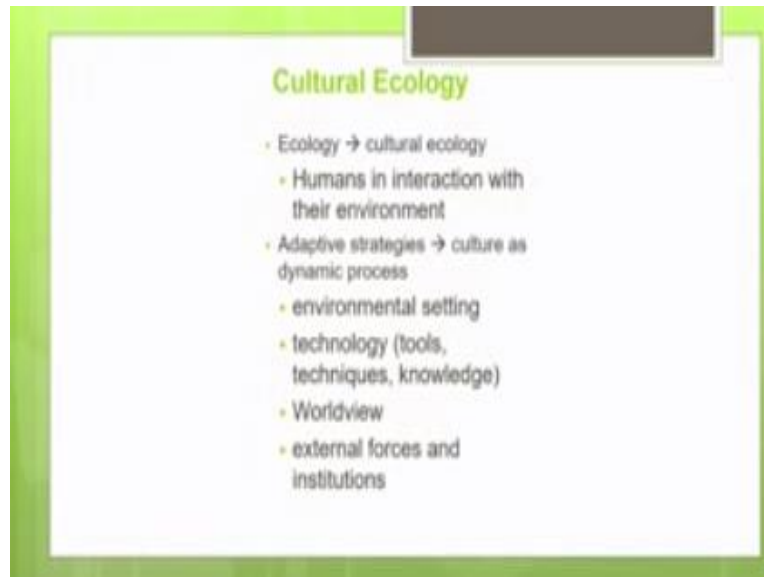


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So with usually through these ideas we tend to have or perceive our world will are being said now culture in essence can be briefly categorized as culture is systems culture is a process which is not static and it is implicit and tested which is external or innocence indigenous and it is also explicit and external when subtle search ideas which in essence is implicit when it is being expressed in accent now then it becomes explicit and visible to someone who even does not belong to that particular community.

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Now what then is cultural ecology how does it relate ecology and culture or how does a society maximize or interpret ecology now for many stages of life human enters into a certain kind of interaction with their environment and through these interactions they have in essence adapt and learn certain kind of values in relationship with the environment and this relationship might not be similar to different societies it differs it depends on what kind of societies has what sort of relationship with it.

Now that is perhaps one of the main ideas how we need to see things in context or maybe Texan context we cannot afford to interpret things outside the context unless we try to see things in the context will miss out certain meanings which are being embedded into that particular community now in this interaction with the environment mankind has adopted different strategies and culture becomes a dynamic process.

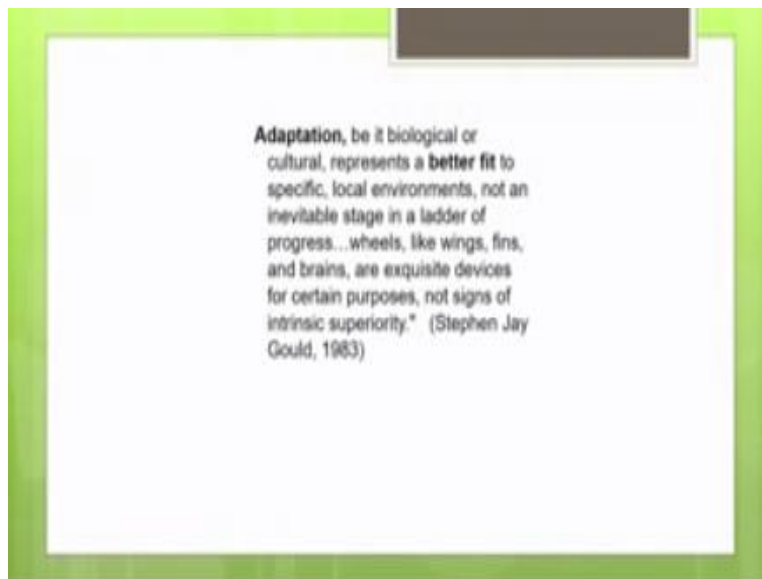
Now for instance the environment- setting weather the climate the kind of terrain where once inhabit or maybe depending on the availability of water forests all this in essence tends to have an impact on the cultural practices of a society now it also differs depending on the environment which we use into the technology which we use that is the tools techniques knowledge right now

maybe the knowledge which an Indian indigenous people have may not sound to be death appealing or it might sound awkward and unscientific.

But those knowledge are something which is bent which has been learned as a result of their interaction with the environment now similarly the worldview how we perceive the way the perceptions which we have on things around us is also influenced by the kind of environment which we are exposed to and the external forces and in traditions we can't afford to see society in isolation at least in the modern days period.

So these external forces for instance the market economy has sort of a far-reaching impact on a tribal society the way they relate toothier resources the way they make sense of their overall relationship within the members of the society how the value things has changed and evolved as a result of this external forces now what then is adaptation.

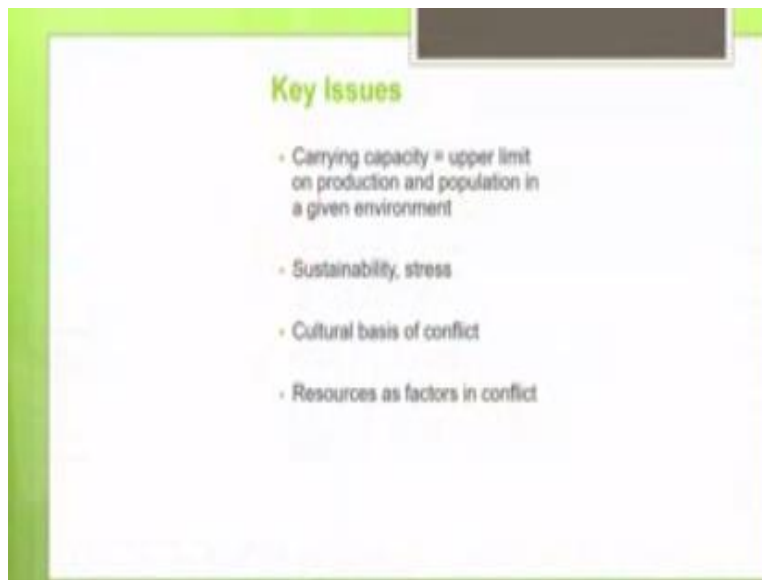
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If you look at this definition which is given by Stephen Jay it can be obvious biological or cultural it represents a better fit to specific local environments not an inevitable States in letter of progressed will like wings fins and brains are exquisite devices for certain purposes not science

of intrinsic superiority now these are something where in a sense the external forces let's say the environment has enormous Li influences an individual the explicit innocence has influenced the implicit.

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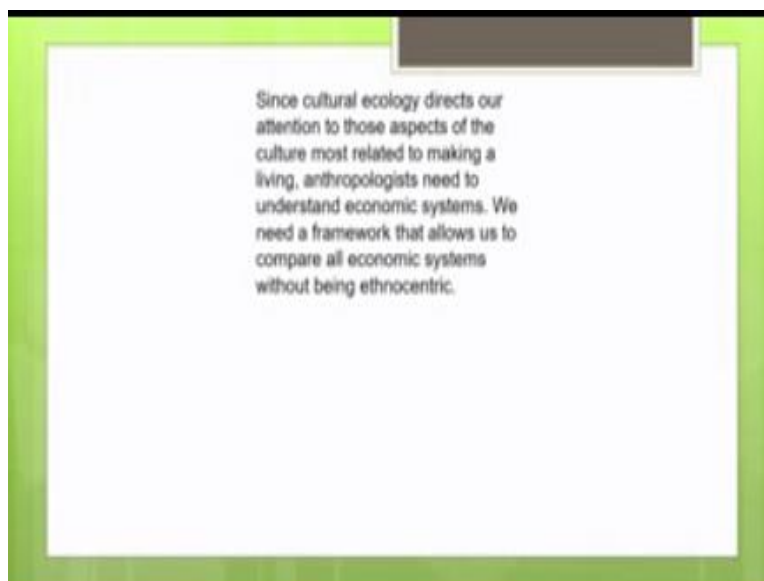
Now some of the key issues while discussing culture or maybe in cultural ecology we need to look ascertain points like for instance the carrying capacity there is the upper limit on production and populations in a given environment that is which our time and again pointed out the demand and supply how it functions now there is also these sustainability and stressed and how are these to be looked at how is sustainably to be maxims we can't afford to make sense of sustainability out of the context again.

We need to seething in context and try to find the deeper meanings of how a cultural community Maxim's of their environment now they can also be cultural basis of one flick resources as factors in one flake now one flip in the modern parlance and what it used to be in traditional society is also different again now the conflict in traditional society might be based on intertribal warfare where usually ratings are being conducted.

So more or less those raiding where in the notice in DI Ghent or you might have been familiar about the headhunting headhunters against this tribal communities at one point of bailing from much spree Cornell encounters and then even in some period even when they encounter the colonists they still practices this headhunting now what is this headhunting usually a different community is being raided and they bring break.

The heads of those enemies which are known to be prophets now again this headhunting practices is to do with the kind of a test of masculinity because only an able-bodied and a strong warrior can be successful in this kind of war expedition but this conflict which I talk about usually in the intertribal warfare is not because of something which to do with the resources or the intention is never occupying territory or a territorial expansion which in essence is different from the modern forms of colonialism for example.

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Now the imperialists in essence or maybe the corporate in the post-industrial society usually are more or less interest in trying to extract the resources of their surroundings or maybe they try to you know colonize or untruth in other words that is that is how colonialism and this industrialization process in essence goes alongside now as viscous since cultural ecology director

attentions to those aspects of the culture most related to making a living anthropologists or if not sociologists need to understand the economic systems.

Why is this economic system given so much important we need framework that allow us to compare all economic system without being ethnocentric the reason being that what would and what historical period of time where we are into we might in some way ridiculed try to suck off the kind of economic system which has actually been prevalent in the past therefore unless we tries to look at the economic system which was practices in the past or in the different successive stages of societies.

It will be difficult for us to actually locate the kind of relationship with human societies relate with their ecology so in a sense to have a wider understanding of cultural ecology it is important to look at the different frames of economic systems in different societies and by comparing different stages of societies maybe beginning from the hunting and gathering that is the phrasings and then it goes on now in our next discussion we will try to look into these different forms of economic systems in different societies how they prevail and functions and what is the sort of cultural ecological meanings to those people who have practices as forms of economic systems.

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