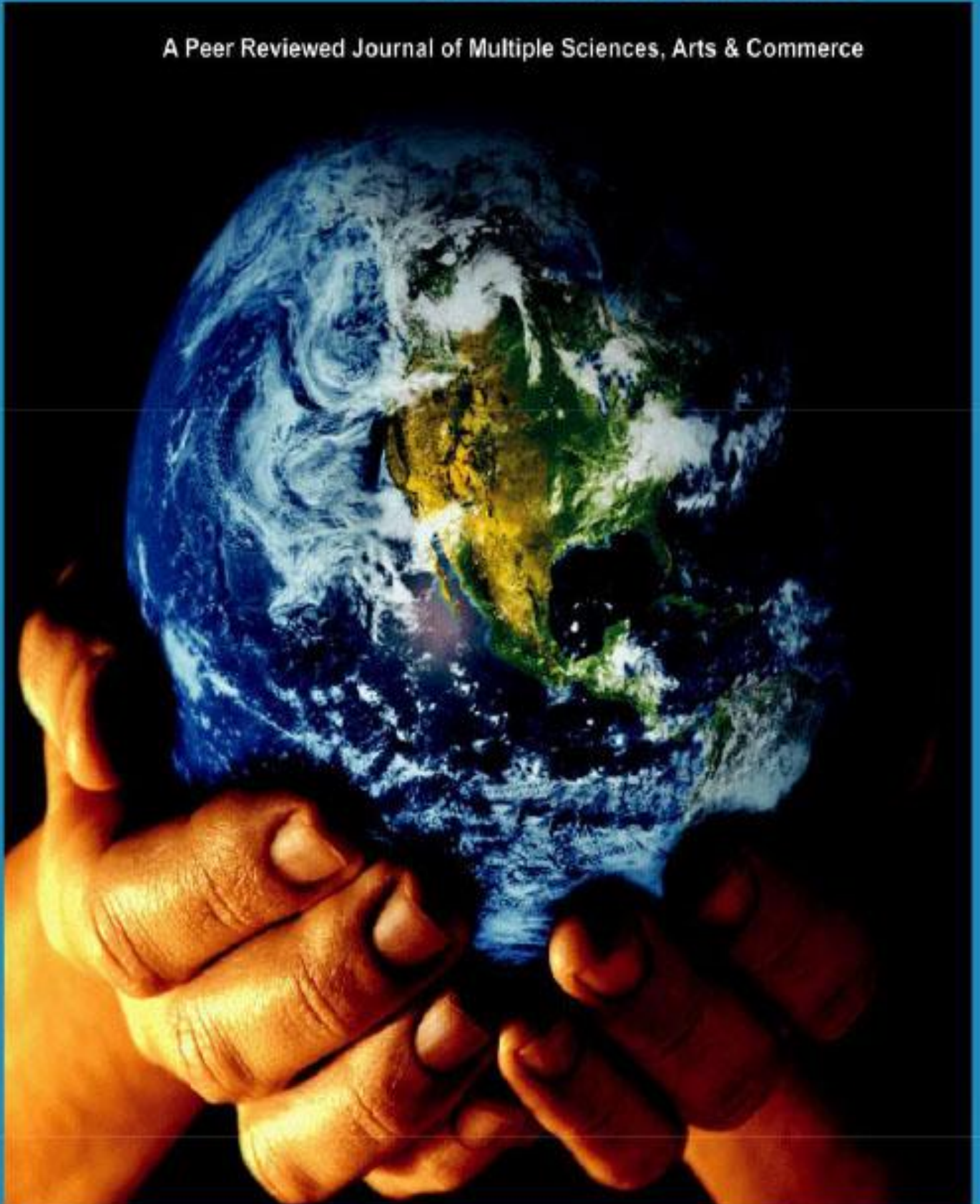


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*From the Desk of Chief Editor...*

*It is a matter of proud privilege for me to place before the Indian academia the 8<sup>th</sup> volume of **Research Fronts (2018)**, one of the most regular journals in our country. Over the years, scholars from various universities have been highly appreciative of our attempt, to not only regularly publish and but also improve the quality of a research journal, being brought out from a mufassil college in a backward region. Contextually, it needs emphasis that I have succeeded in my endeavors, to a large extent, because of my **alma mater, The Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi**. Despite shockwaves created by vested interests, the university is internationally recognized for scientific vision, academic freedom, interdisciplinary research and high quality of knowledge production. The **peer group** formed during my formative years in **CSRD/SSS/JNU**, are now noted academicians in various universities of our country. Whenever I requested for quality research papers for our journal, they never disappointed me. However, this 8<sup>th</sup> volume was hurriedly planned and executed, hardly within three months. Consequently, I could get response only from my JNU fraternity as well as from Indore University.*

*I, therefore, take an opportunity to highlight some of the salient features of the papers including areal coverage of the contributing universities as well as the disciplines. **One**, this volume contains **10 articles** from multiple disciplines of **Geography, Economics and Business Administration**. **Two**, the very first article, **Richard Hartshorne: A Biographical Sketch and Academic Pathways** is an outstanding piece of work, from the stature of a world class geographer that may encourage others to follow. Article on **Cultural Studies** will acquaint the readers with the emergence of a new discipline in the western world. Space and place may be considered as the **raison d'être** of geography. In this context, paper on **Space Imagination** interrogates the philosophy in a very simple language. Similarly, paper on **Social Justice through Quota in India**, conceptually rooted in the philosophies of social welfare provides some newer insights about it. Similarly, **all other papers** rooted in local/regional issues are also immersed in scientific rigour, employing appropriate methodologies and have their own great value.*

*Three*, it is a national level publication in terms of its geographical coverage of articles received from *North India* (3), *East India* (2), *West India* (2) and *Central India* (3). *Four*, the institutions involved are *Jamia Millia Islamia*, New Delhi, *ITS Engineering College*, Greater Noida, *The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda*, Vadodara, *Shivaji University*, Kolhapur, *Devi Ahilya Viswavidyalaya*, Indore, *Calcutta University*, Kolkata, and *Ravenshaw University*, Cuttack. The overall improvement in the quality of research production and geographical coverage of articles in this volume ostensibly reflect that the journal has come out of its stage of infancy, and can rightly claim its national status.

I am highly thankful to all the contributors who have sent their scholarly works for publication as well as promptly revising them according to reviewer's comments. I am extremely obliged to my friends, Shri Mumtaz Khan (New Delhi) and Prof. Gyan Prakash (Indore), for their kind help and consistent encouragement, over the years, for improving the quality of publication besides reviewing the papers and suggesting the required changes.

I am extremely thankful to our Principal Dr. R. N. Singh for his patronage, inspiration and encouragement in this noble effort. I highly appreciate the academic and moral support of my enthusiastic colleagues, Dr. Shailendra Singh and Dr. Sanjay Thiske, the editor and associate editor respectively. I extend my special thanks to Dr. Pramod Kumar Mahish and Shri Raju Khunttey, both assistant editors, for extending their technical know-how in setting, formatting and converting the word files into pdf ones, so that we may be saved from the blunders of unprofessional printers of this small town. However, as Chief Editor of the Journal, for any lacunae, the sole responsibility lies in me. Moreover, suggestions for improvement in the quality of the journal would be highly appreciated.

Krishna Nandan Prasad

## **Cultural Studies: A Brief Note on the Emergence of a New Discipline**

Atia Rabbi Nizami\*

### **Abstract**

In the present paper we have tried to explore the fascinating field of Cultural Studies that has emerged during the second half of twentieth Century. Besides looking at the definitional complexities, it also attempts to understand the principal actors, theories, and core issues in the evolutionary process of the discipline.

### **Introduction**

System of science (physical, biological and social) during the second half of twentieth century has been facing a unique problem of disintegration, realignment and emergence of newer disciplines. Over specialization and concentration of research largely in the frontiers of disciplinary boundaries of all the fields has culminated in a distinct scenario. The flood of newer research and publications even in the sub-disciplines of each and every field facilitated more by the technological revolution has resulted in the vast amount of knowledge production. Consequently, where frontiers of various disciplines meet and intersect newer types of disciplines are emerging. In this context, cultural studies as a vibrant area of research and teaching have emerged as a distinct discipline. Despite being deep in expertise its appeal is substantially broad. In this short essay we are, therefore, trying to explore the emergence and scope this fascinating field

### **Definitional Complexities**

Every discipline that emerges out of historical process continuously undergoes changes in its scope, perspectives and methods. Defining an ever-changing discipline is, therefore, a complex issue. Philosophical, methodological and technological advancements in the knowledge production make it a more challenging task. Despite a very brief history of the emergence of cultural studies it is still beset with definitional articulations. Culture Studies is an innovative interdisciplinary field of research and training which is concerned

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with the role of social institution in shaping of cultures (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2015). It investigates the ways in which ‘culture’ creates and transforms individual experiences, everyday life, social relations and power. This field explores the relation between the understood culture and the human expressions through symbolic activities. Culture studies is also devoted to the understanding of the process through which societies and the diverse groups within them come into present community life.

The web of definitions, range from explicit to implicit, historical cartographies of its past to claims made on its future. Colin Sparks (1977), one of the leading scholars, succinctly identified the problems in defining the field of Cultural Studies. The newer discipline emerged from the unquestionable methods and ideas of a number of disciplines like literary criticism, sociology, history, and media studies etc. On the other hand, John Fiske (1976) advocates that ‘culture’ in cultural studies is a ‘political’ emphasis as it is not a humanist rather spiritual, intellectual and aesthetic development (Storey, J.1997:1). His approach recommends popularity as an indicator of quality.

Raymond Williams (1976, 60), the famous anthropologist assigned it to be understood from ‘a particular way of life either of people or a group.’ This definition not only included the ideas of the former two scholars but also tried to include the study of popular culture. Moreover, scholars also used the concept of ‘text’ as a fundamental model in comprehending ‘cultural studies’ (Storey, J. 1997: 345) Moreover, Grossberg et.al., (1992) have argued that Cultural Studies has stressed on the critical analysis ‘which is embedded, descriptive and historically and contextually specific.’ For them concepts are tools for thinking and acting in the world (Storey, J. 1997: 178).

Stuart Hall states that Cultural Studies is ‘a cluster of ideas, images and practices, which provide ways of talking about, forms of knowledge and conduct associated with a particular topic, social activity, or institutional site in society’ (Storey, 1997: 33). Even to pin down the boundaries of cultural studies was difficult. As an integrated academic discipline, it lacks topics, concepts and methods which are different from other disciplines. It always had multi-disciplinary or post disciplinary field of enquiry which creates a boundary between its own and other subjects. Hence Cultural Studies is legitimated by a regulated way of speaking and modification of the key concepts, ideas and concerns.

### **Evolution of the Discipline**

The general phenomenon of Cultural Studies was begun locally, at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) in 1964 at the University of Birmingham, England. It is believed that the intellectual base and geographic scope of the Cultural studies was extended from the CCCS. Interestingly, Richard Hoggart who was the founder and the first director of the CCCS established it as a postgraduate research centre. One cannot deny the fact that the school not only recognized the importance of culture but also maintained the political order in the modern society.

However, most scholars trace the origin of Cultural Studies in the books published in late 1950's and early 1960's by the academicians of English Literature. The books titled as *The Uses of Literacy* (1957) by Richard Hoggart, *Culture and Society* (1958) by Raymond Williams and *The Making of English Working Class* (1963) by E. P. Thompson were locating the origins of Cultural Studies (Storey. 1997: 15). Even though all the texts were concerned with 'popular culture' but they also challenged the traditional elitist notions of culture as art and aesthetics.

Paul Smith's recent anthology (2011) provides a contemporary status of the field that has gone beyond the old questions and strives to define where we stand now. "The task of defining our object(s) of study, establishing theoretical common ground and methodological consistency, and providing reproducible methods and protocols all need to be undertaken sooner rather than later" (Smith, P. 2011:3).

### **Core Issues of the Discipline**

(i) **Culture and Signifying Practices:** Signifying practices in culture are the meaning-making behaviours in which people engage following particular conventions or rules of construction and interpretation. However cultural studies argued that language is not a neutral medium for the formation of meanings and knowledge about an independent object world 'existing' outside of language. Furthermore, it also clarified that language gives meaning to material objects and social activities that are brought into view by language and made intelligible to us in terms that language delimits. Hence in order to understand culture we need to explore how the meanings are produced symbolically in a language as a 'signifying system.'



(ii) **Representation:** Cultural Studies is centred on questions of representation, that is on how the world is socially structured and represented in a meaningful way. Cultural theorist Stuart Hall describes representation as the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture through the use of language, signs and images which stand for or represent things (Hall, S. 1997: 4). Moreover, cultural representations and meanings have certain materiality. They are integrated in sounds, inscriptions, objects, images, books, magazines and television programmes.

(iii) **Materialism:** Cultural studies is mostly concerned with modern industrialized economies as well as with the media cultures which are organized on capitalist lines. In these, the representations are produced by profit-motivated corporations. It is in this context that, structural studies has developed a form of cultural materialism concerned with understanding how and why specific meanings are inscribed at the time of production. Therefore, in addition to keeping the focus on signifying practices, cultural studies also try to connect these to political economy (Barker, C. 2008: 9). In this manner, cultural studies, as a discipline is concerned with power and the distribution of economic and social resources. Consequently, it is concerned with: who owns as well as controls cultural production; distribution mechanisms used for cultural products; and the consequences of the patterns of ownership and control of the outlines of the cultural landscape.

(iv) **Non-Reductionism:** Within the characteristics of non-reductionism in Cultural Studies, each culture is viewed as having its own particular meanings, rules and practices, which cannot be reduced to or explained only in terms of some other category or level of social formation. Cultural studies has specifically fought against economic reductionism which tries to explain meanings of cultural texts with reference to its place in the production process. The processes of political economy do not determine meanings of texts in cultural studies. Political economy, social relationships and culture are to be understood on the basis of their own specific logic and methods of development. Each one of these is 'articulated' or related to the other in context-specific manner. Non-reductionism of cultural studies emphasizes that class, gender, sexuality, race, nation, as well as ethnicity have their own specifics and they cannot be reduced to political economy or to each other (Rai, R. and K. Panna 2015: 7).

(v) **Articulation:** The concepts of articulation theorize the relationship between components of social formations. It points towards the connections of two or more different elements under certain conditions. Articulation sometimes also deploys for discussing the relationship between culture and political economy. Even the moment of production can be inscribed in texts, in such a way that 'economic is cultural' which is also a meaningful set of practices. Fundamentally, in this discipline articulation is a method to analyse culture which visualize new frameworks for interpretations.

(vi) **Power:** The scholars of Cultural Studies generally agree on the centrality of the concept of power. They regard power is seen as pervading at every level of social relationships. For them power is a glue which holds the social groups together. Sometimes it is also seen in terms of processes generating and enabling any form of social action, relationship or order. Cultural studies is specifically concerned with subordinated groups, mainly class, race, gender, age group etc.

(vii) **Popular Culture:** Cultural Studies has commonly understood that popular culture is the ground on which the consent is won or lost. With an objective of understanding the interplay of power and consent, the two concepts of ideology and hegemony are deployed in the earlier texts of Cultural Studies. Ideology in these refers to the maps of meanings which are presented as universal truths, whereas historically it was meant for a specific understanding that obscure and maintain power.

(viii) **Texts and Readers:** Texts refers to the written words as well as practices signified. The concept not only describes the range of cultural objects through writings bur also their practices that signify them. This includes generating meanings through sounds, objects (like clothes) and activities (like dance and sports). Since images, sounds and practices are the system which signifies with the same mechanism as a language it may be referred as cultural text.

(ix) **Subjectivity and Identity:** During the 1990s identity became the central area of concern in cultural studies following the subjectivity of how we describe ourselves to each other. Therefore, we can say that the cultural studies explore the questions of:

- how we come to be the kind of people we are
- how we are produced as subjects
- how we identify with descriptions of ourselves as male or female, black or white, young or old etc.

Even the argument of anti-essentialism states that identities are not things that exist; they do not have essential or universal qualities. In fact, they are discursive construction, products of discourses or regulated ways of speaking through the world. So, identities are made rather than found through representation, especially language. For instance, in relation to media, an individual may define himself/herself as a heavy metal fan or a fan of rock music.

### **Principal Actors and Theories in the Development of Cultural Studies.**

During the 1950s and 1960s, interest in cultural theories of mass communication began to develop and take hold. This can be discussed via the three fundamental theories. First, the famous **Limited effects theory** focuses about the immediate and direct effect of media content that raised the question: Can this direct effect of media changes the specific thoughts and actions of individuals? However, it is possible to approach the study of mass media in another way. Instead of focusing on specific effects on individuals, we can focus on changes in culture, on how shared understandings and social norms change. Instead of trying to locate hundreds of small effects and adding them all, we can enquire whether the development of mass media have had any profound implications in the manner we create, share, learn and apply culture. These new perspectives argued that media might have the power to intrude into and alter how we make sense of ourselves and our social world. These theories are quite diverse and offer very different answers to questions about the role of media in social life. Nonetheless, the concept of *culture* is central in all these theories. Media has immense role in understanding how culture is created, shared, learnt and applied. Cultural theories offer a broad range of interesting ideas about how media can affect culture and also provide many different views concerning the long-term consequences of the cultural changes effected by media (Rai, R. and K. Panna 2015: 1).

Second, the microscopic, interpretive theories focus on ‘how individuals and social groups use media to create and foster new forms of culture’ that structure everyday life. These theories are generally referred as *cultural studies theories*. And third, the macroscopic, structural theories which focus on how social elites use their economic power to gain control over and exploit media institution. These are the **political economic theories** because they place priority on how economic power provides a basis for

ideological and political power. These theories argue that elites effectively use media to propagate hegemonic culture as a means of maintaining their dominant position in the social order. Cultural studies is less concerned about the long-term consequences of media for social order but is more concerned about looking at how media affect our individual life (Rai, R. and K. Panna 2015: 3). These theories are said to be micro level or microscopic because they emphasize larger issues about the social order in favour of questions involving the everyday life of average people. **Critical theories and political theories** in contrast are macroscopic cultural theories, which are less concerned about developing detailed explanation of how individuals are influenced by media but are more concerned about how the social order as a whole is affected. Ideally, both these theories ought to be complementary. Yet until recently, macroscopic and microscopic cultural theories developed in relative isolation. Theorists were separated by differences in geography, politics and research objectives.

### ***Concluding Remarks***

Cultural Studies, a fascinating new discipline has emerged out of the expanding frontiers of a host of analytically autonomous disciplines. Like any other field, it has its own definitional complexities, research orientations of its founding fathers as well as contemporary scholars, nature of theories and core issues. Notwithstanding these, having multifaceted relationship with cognate disciplines, it has successfully carved out a distinct place among the system of science. Teaching of cultural studies as a distinct field, creation of academic positions for teaching and conducting research in the prominent universities all over the world, production of knowledge in the form of books (both edited and text books) as well as publication of specific journal associated with this field has resulted in providing it a distinct and honourable place in the advancing front of academia.

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