

Ideology, ethnicity, social class, and gender

[Sociology](#), [Identity](#)



Culture is defined as the systematic philosophy of life or as the behaviour, beliefs and symbols that people accept. These customs passed from one generation to the other because it transforms their behaviour and character. Cultural studies include political economy, communication, social theory, literary theory, media theory etc.

The study mainly focuses on how a particular phenomenon relates to ideology, ethnicity, social class and gender. Culture also plays an important role in art and literature. Raymond William's "cultural materialism" plays a dominant role in the field of cultural studies. William's definition of culture is apt and significant in this connection:

Culture is one of the two or three complicated words in English. This is so partly because of its intricate historical development in several European languages, but mainly because it has now come to be used for important concepts in several distinct intellectual disciplines and in several distinct and incompatible systems of thought. (William 76)

The process of culture has become so powerful that it decides the identity of a man on the one hand and on the other hand it assimilates the different cultures in a single thread. If we talk about the relevance of culture in the perspective of present scenario it is more complex than earlier. The impact of globalization has increased the cultural differences. Due to culture studies, society has undergone many changes such as the change in life style, behaviour, perception and religion etc.

As due to the effect of globalization though people are getting appreciation, education and knowledge but they are losing their customs and traditions

which were the boon to them. Our culture is decaying because people are neglecting their traditions, manners and customs. They are adopting the western culture blindly without knowing whether it is good or bad. If we want to live happily we have to bring our culture back.

So, in this paper, I am taking up Rita Garg's novel, *An Abbreviated Child: Gloom to Bloom* and have tried to trace the decay in culture through different characters of the novel. The culture does not have a fixed definition; it changes from time to time, generation to generation.

The novelist, very aptly describes the condition of the poor folk who are passing their life in pain and sufferance because they don't get opportunities and life is stuck for them. Any attempt made to get over, sticks their feet and hands in their misery-woven net. In this novel, the setting covers the land from Canada and America to Delhi and Uttarakhand. The folk talked about belong to the Shivalik Hills, the border hilly area. Incidentally, this hill range also has Jaunsar Babar area where Draupadi was married to the Pandava brothers in the Mahabharata. The Shivalik hill range has constraints of its own type and that is projected well but in precise language by the novelist.

This area has more of labour class and the labouring women keep doing their job. Nonetheless, they have to cut short the time to be given to children; consequentially, the child may or may not grow to the proper circumstances in life. Kalia, the villainy following man, was born as a handsome and active boy but also naughty. His labour class mother often made the child lick opium so that she would be working and the child would sleep quietly and not face hazards at such sites as quarry, damn or landslide.

As a matter of fact, this practice, in this area of hills, produces not one but many Kalias. The poor women practise this on their children and the latter become alcoholics. Kalia gets used to drinks and dies early. Prior to his death, he sells his sister Gauri, for Income Tax free Rs. 20, 000. All the time he needs money. This act of Kalia is not uncommon. This hillside is known for the payment made by the groom. Here, the buyer of Gauri makes her work as an animal to plough the farm and to work as a woman otherwise.

Status of women in hill states is quite different due to prevailing topographical and geographical condition where woman are involved in more physical activities outside home like work in the fields, orchards, and rearing animal and also engaged in small cottage industries. More and more women are also holding jobs in government offices and private sector as well. Besides, their role has become important in decision making, planning and execution of rural development schemes. (Indian Journal of Public Administration)

This entire novel deals with the dismal scene of poverty and over population. Under these circumstances, the effort to uplift the poor through education and employment are worth acclamation. To improve upon further, some individuals ought to come forward and help the needy. No matter, at what level. Here the novelist talks of an orphanage run by Mrs Preet Rani. Over here, many orphans are given proper care. As per the talent, they achieve the difficult goals.

This region of Shivalik Hills is not prosperous. To fight poverty, both men and women work. In this race, the young children suffer. Their sufferings

of childhood follow them till late ages. An easy way to keep the son under control is to control the senses. This is so widespread that no one minds this and no one pays heed to check the practice. The long practice has become the part of culture even. It is taken for granted that such a life style is normal.

The repercussions are too much. The character of Kalia suffices to prove this. In his case, it was his mother who used to make him lick opium when her mother-in-law was unwell. The permanent loss out of the event is that the abbreviation of the child is a natural outcome. The growth of a race depends on the strength of the entire community. A weak race is no race. Rather this is to mar the race or the culture.