

CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE CULTURAL ELEMENTS IN DON BOSCO'S PEDAGOGY:

A CULTURAL ANALYSIS

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1. INTRODUCTION

Our world is full of cultural varieties and cultural values. Every field of knowledge is dressed up in cultural expressions. This cultural world is full of colourful surprises that make every human being learn and relearn much in terms of relationships. So, reading and understanding of any history have to take into account the cultural background and its influences. It is this clarity of vision that guided Don Bosco, in a beautiful blend of nature and grace, to bring in the cultural elements in his work and mission, for the young people of his time. Now, the Salesians (as sons of Don Bosco) and the members of the vast Salesian family carry on this legacy all over the world. As an educational method and ambience, the Preventive System of Education of the young as envisaged by Don Bosco unfolded gradually in the history of Italy and Europe in the 19th century. The historical background of Don Bosco, as a founder of a religious congregation, is studied much now, to understand and emulate the origin of such a unique charism in the Catholic Church. This knowledge and experience go together to constitute the Salesian charism and culture. In this article, the purpose is to present a clear picture of culture, to delineate the salient features of culture as understood universally and to analyse such cultural elements in the educational method of Don Bosco. The navigation of this vast field of culture will be enabled by the thoughts of Fred Dallmayr, on which we can base our edifice of knowledge and research.

2. CULTURE

'Culture' is one of the words used or misused much in various meanings and contexts. For example, "campus-culture" or "I don't like the culture there" or "We are losing our culture" are statements that invite our consideration as to what exactly a 'culture' is. Can 'culture' be equated with the term 'cultural'? Or is 'culture' considered as something 'against nature'? Traditionally in most cases, the Western interpretation of 'culture' is in contraposition to 'nature.' A few Western thinkers still construe culture explicitly in terms of religious traditions. Most definitions wrongly identify the notion of "culture" exclusively with customs, religions, technology, and civilization although they are related. In a much better sense, 'Culture' is referred to in terms of interior and non-material cultivation or progress. It is concerned with interior formation and growth. In contrast, civilization refers to the material and exterior growth of society. It is this which enables civilization to come under the standard of measurement, whereas culture cannot be measured. In ancient Greece every craftsman was a cultured person. Socrates used technology

and knowledge interchangeably. Culture and technology are linked but in the present context they are distinct. The Humanities and cultural studies are distinguished now from natural and technical studies. Religious culture is significant as it has strong ritual ties and obligatory statutes. But, both religion and culture cannot be merged into each other. Since culture is manifold in its meaning, links, and influences in all walks of life, it is plural by its nature. It can be boldly said that cultural purity is an oxymoron.

3. MEANINGS, DEFINITIONS, AND EXPLANATIONS

First of all, etymologically, 'culture' is derived from the Latin verbs *colere* and *cultivare* which leads us to the noun *cultura*. *Colere* means to raise, nurse, protect, inhabit; *cultivare* refers to agricultural work, cattle feeding, stone or metal or woodcutting. Then, *cultura* should mean cult and agriculture, denoting any human ritual, spiritual or tending activity. A parallel concept in Greek is found in the equivalent word *techne* from the adjective *technike*, which connotes a craft or craftsman (Latin *ars* or *artefactum*). Originally the interchangeable words in Greek-culture and technique were different but remained interconnected. Now-a-days, culture has a newer meaning referring to the culture of the mind. In Hindi, the closest word to mean culture is *sanskriti* from the root word *sanskar*, meaning fulfillment of rituals in social life.¹ Hence, the earliest use of the term referred to agrarian work (like tilling, tending and so on), then it extended to cultivation or education of the mind, then it included the world of artistic sensitivity and much later the term extended its meaning to include social gracefulness and etiquette.²

Secondly, several sociologists, anthropologists and religious thinkers have proposed definitions of this complex concept. One of the famous definitions of culture even today is from Edward B. Taylor: "Culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of a society."³ Two American anthropologists Alfred Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn have categorized their long list of definitions into narrative, psychological, structural and genetic groups. Some of these pithy definitions of culture are: "assemblage of practices and beliefs that determine the texture of our lives" (Saphir), "total way of life of a people" (Kluckhohn), "a precipitate of man's social life" (Young), "the development of material and spiritual, of individuals and

¹ V. S. Upadhyay/Gaya Pandey, *History of Anthropological Thought*, (New Delhi: Sage, 1993, 2nd edition 1997) 346. Cf. also Peter Janich, *Kultur und Methode: Philosophie in einer wissenschaftlich geprägten Welt* (Frankfurt: 2006) 15-16; Terry Eagleton, *The Idea of Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) 16-18 as referred in Joseph Pandiappallil, "Culture: A Philosophical Clarification of the Notion," in Keith D'Souza ed., *Culture as Gift and Task: Philosophical Reflections in the Indian Context*, (Bangalore: ATC, 2008) 28-31; Cf. also Robert Bernhardt, ed., *Chambers Dictionary of Etymology* (New York: Chambers, 1988) 241.

² Cf. Robert Bernhardt, ed., 241.

³ Subhadra Channa, *Understanding Society, Culture and Change* (New Delhi: Blaze Publishers, 1994) 23 as from L. Jeyaseelan, *Towards a Counter-Culture: Sebastian Kappen's Contribution* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1999) 12.

groups” (Schweitzer) and “all behaviour mediated by symbols” (Bain).⁴ The famous ethnographic writer Clifford Geertz’s definition of culture is as follows: “The concept of culture I espouse is essentially a semiotic one. Believing Max Weber that man is an animal suspended in webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of laws, but an interpretive one in search of meanings.”⁵ Panikkar gives the shortest definition: “Culture is myth.” “For the myth gives us the horizon of intelligibility where we must situate the idea, any conviction or any act of consciousness, so that they may be held by our mind.”⁶ Dallmayr in his reflective judgment explained culture as “not merely a set of artifacts but rather a way of life, a manner of thinking and acting shared by a group of people over time.”⁷ He goes on to note that culture provides a kind of framework to understand the world and gives meaning to concepts like development. Dallmayr takes this link of culture with development to further imply development’s stronger meaning as not just a frame of reference but much more as a process of formation or cultivation or education.⁸ Dallmayr in working out a hermeneutics for cross-cultural studies described cultures as “complex semantic clusters” and in Wittgensteinian terms added that cultures are “complex language games” and “forms of life.”⁹

Thirdly, culture can be explained to understand its significance. In explaining¹⁰ about culture one can gather all the integral elements of culture. Raymond Williams gives the four fundamental meanings of the use of the term culture. Culture is seen as: 1) “a particular way of life, of a group or a period,” 2) “a general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development,” 3) “works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity” and 4) the signifying systems through which necessarily (though among other means) a social order is communicated, reproduced, experienced and explored.”¹¹ Some of the prominent thematic descriptions of culture are presented below to enhance their understanding and enable their application.

3.1. Culture As *Bildung*: The theme of (global) development, quipped Dallmayr, is closely linked with culture. By undertaking a philosophical reflective critical (or evaluative) judgment on the concept “development”, the notion of “culture” is explained. The connection between the terms is more prevalent

⁴ Cf. A. L. Kroeber and C. Kluckhohn, *Culture: A Critical Review of Key Concepts and Definitions*, (New York: Vintage, 1963). The author lists more than 200 definitions of culture and demonstrated here the difficulty of satisfactory definition of culture. Culture is also viewed as a progressive one that constantly seems to grow and challenge.

⁵ Clifford Geertz, *In the Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973) 5.

⁶ Raimon Panikkar, *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics: Cross-Cultural Studies* (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 1983) 101.

⁷ Fred Dallmayr, *Alternative Visions: Paths in the Global Village*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004, 243.

⁸ Fred Dallmayr, *Alternative Visions*, 243. Dallmayr utilized the great German classical term *Bildung* to explain the concept of development, borrowing from Gadamer through Herder. He himself explains that the German word would mean ‘cultivation’ or ‘formation.’ This carries enormous philosophical and political reflections.

⁹ Fred Dallmayr, *Integral Pluralism: Beyond Culture Wars*, (Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 2010), 104. Although, we could always keep in mind one of the chief functions of philosophers is to give definition of elements of reality.

¹¹ Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977) 11-20.

now than before, so that “development” has displaced the term “culture” altogether. But now, what is culture? It is no longer just a situation or referential point but a process, indicating the formative or educative element in the process. This thought process is translated by the German word *Bildung*. Gadamer considered this term as the greatest idea of the 18th and 19th centuries in the field of humanities. Gadamer acknowledges that the prominence of this term *Bildung* was mainly because of the work of Herder, with his transformative conceptual expressions such as “human cultivation” (*Bildung zum Menschen*) and “rising up to humanity through culture” (*Emporbildung zur Humanität*). Down the century the Hegelian concept of *Bildung* as self-formation and a self-formation of reason (*Bildung zur Vernunft*) is on the same lines.¹² Dallmayr in a more scholarly and inclusive approach towards world cultures portrayed the traces of this notion of a formative process in Judaeo Christian Biblical narrations, in Indian narrative traditions in the form of epics - *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, in Chinese Confucian *chün-tzu* (noble virtues) propagated by noble teacher K’ung-fu-tzu, and in the *astānga-mārga* (the eight fold path) of Buddhism to augment his exposition on culture. With this background of reflective judgment Dallmayr elucidated three points of importance on culture.¹³ They are: 1) “Culture is important for providing a (philosophical) frame of reference through which development of any kind (economic or scientific or cultural) can be discussed and formulated.” 2) “Culture is important as an antidote to the ongoing process of global standardization and Westernization, a source of resistance (as counterculture) for non-Western societies in the grip of Western hegemony.” 3) The third notion is “culture as cultivation, self-formation, and self-transformation (*Bildung*). By retaining the memory of traditional legacies....development is a learning process proceeding through loss and self-abandonment, or rather a process leading to self-discovery through loss and abandonment. Culture in this sense is crucial both for salvaging the human (or humanistic) meaning of development and for providing a bulwark against cultural isolation or self-enclosure.” These notions could very well be compared with the earlier understanding of the notion of culture with an old prevalent phrase, “the cultivation of the mind.” This phrase does not mean a rigid, manipulative, forceful act but Dallmayrian ‘letting be’ or enabling a person to be/become his/her own essence.

3.2. Cultural Change: As it has been seen above that the Dallmayrian concept of linking culture with development underscores another feature of culture itself, namely, cultural change. It is observable that culture is changing or growing or evolving. Dallmayr would say that cultures “are internally diversified and unfinished, that is, always evolving and on the move.”¹⁴ With changes all around it culture itself has to undergo change. “A culture that does not react and change with time is as good as a dead one or it is dying,

¹² Fred Dallmayr, *Alternative Visions*, 242-244.

¹³ Fred Dallmayr, *Alternative Visions*, 247-248. The words within the brackets are words inserted by the author of this article.

¹⁴ Fred Dallmayr, *Integral Pluralism*, 104.

or at best maintains a fossilized form of existence, fit to be turned into a museum piece.”¹⁵ It is good to keep in mind that “although culture is spatio-historically conditioned, its expressions are trans-spatio-temporal...Thus *cultural depth* of any expression is in proportion to its *spatio-temporal* width.”¹⁶ So, culture is adaptive and can pave the way for global culture, not of unity or uniformity but of plurality. This is a special feature of the transformative nature of cultural openness and an integral element of cultural rootedness. This is termed politically as “multiculturalism” which would be taken up for discussion later in this section. Keith concludes in one of his essays, that cultural change cannot be described in a uniform linear manner. It is because cultural changes take place in endogamous (within cultures) and exogamous (with external influences) ways and by a combination of both influences. Any theoretical consideration of this cultural change, by way of the deontological or deconstructive or virtue ethics approach will only reveal the fact that there can be no universal norm or method for such changes. Only an enhanced intercultural dialogue and individual consciousness will show the right direction in this understanding of the inevitable notion of cultural change to make it productive and not otherwise.¹⁷

3.3. Culture and Identity: Identity is what one is, not what one possesses. According to Chakrabarty, “Identity is not something that ‘we have’; rather, it is ‘what we are’; it is not a ‘property’ but a mode of being.”¹⁸ The formation of identity does depend on lots of external factors.¹⁹ No one will dispute that fact that culture plays an important role in the identity formation of the human person. A person is born into a culture and there is no choice or option for immediate change. Rajeev Bhargava who endorses culture as a vital element in identity formation goes on to add, “that a culture-related self-esteem matters to people as much as the fulfillment of material needs. Equally significant was the recognition that the sense of identity and self-worth of persons derives from cultures that they do not know only well but can and may call their own. Therefore, not culture in general, rather a *particular* culture matters to people.”²⁰ In other words, cultural identity is certainly ennobling, enhancing and enriching and leads to attachment and fulfillment. Culture is a framework within which people begin to understand themselves as to who they are and what they are meant to be. According to Kymlicka, cultural identity could be described as anything

¹⁵ B. K. Matilal, “Pluralism, Relativism and Interaction between Cultures,” in Eliot Deutsch ed., *Culture and Modernity: East-West Philosophic Perspective* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1994) 152.

¹⁶ Johnson J. Puthenpurackal, “Cultural Rootedness and Cultural Openness” in Keith D’Souza ed., *Culture as Gift and Task: Philosophical Reflections in the Indian Context*, 66.

¹⁷ Keith D’ Souza, “Cultural Change: A Multidimensional Process,” in Keith D’Souza, ed., *Culture as Gift and Task*, 125-149.

¹⁸ Biduyt Chakrabarty, *Community Identity in India: Its Construction and Articulation in Twentieth Century* (New Delhi: Penguin Book, 2004) 3.

¹⁹ Huntington gives six sources of identity. They are: 1) Ascriptive (like age, gender, ancestry, ethnicity, race etc.), 2) Cultural (like clan, tribe, religion, language, nationality etc.), 3) Territorial: village, town, city, country, continent etc.), 4) Political (such as faction, party, group, movement, ideology etc.), 5) Economic: (such as class, job, profession, industry etc.) and 6) Social (like colleagues, friends, club, status etc.). Cf. also, Samuel Huntington, *Who we are? America’s Great Debate*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003) 27.

²⁰ Rajeev Bhargava, “The Multicultural Framework,” in *Mapping Multiculturalism*: 78 as quoted in Shailendra, “Cultural Pluralism: A Celebration of Difference,” in Keith D’Souza, ed., *Culture as Gift and Task*, 136.

“from class solidarity or shared citizenship to a common ethnic descent.”²¹ Language and geographical territory play important roles in the formation of cultural identity.²² Indirectly, cultural identity can sometimes overlap into national identity which if taken to an extreme (antagonistic) level can cause unnecessary frictions and fractions.

4. DALLMAYRIAN EXPLORATIONS ON CULTURE

Dallmayr’s interest in ‘culture’ started off in the phenomenological discussion of ‘life-world.’ He **stated** that both Habermas and Gadamer have included culture in their paradigm of discourses. Habermas thought of culture as a “reservoir of shared knowledge and pre-interpretations,” as a synonym of language (!) and as one of the three sub-components of **the** communicative life-world.²³ Gadamer had taken serious note of the role of culture in his method of hermeneutical understanding and the process of dialogue. Later on, he reiterated the importance of uniqueness of cultures and cultural diversity as a pathway to global community or *cosmopolis*.²⁴ Like any other European or American writers, Dallmayr too referred to modernity as Western culture, especially its rational overtures, technological domination and universalistic hegemony. In contrast to other cultures of the world, Western culture seems to take for granted the superiority of its race and thought. This is often questioned by Dallmayr in several of his essays.²⁵ In a rereading of modernity by postmodern thinkers, Dallmayr refers to a series of Indian thinkers purposively on the theme of ‘development.’ Dallmayr presents the writings of Indian philosopher, Sundara Rajan, on social and political development in the Habermasian scheme of thought. Rajan steered the process of development on three axes of cultural communication, self-reflection, and self-expression. In this he explained culture as a synonym for the essentials of social life and portrayed culture as “the architectonic of the symbolic” and as the “domain of symbols of transcendence.”²⁶ This reading was pursued by Dallmayr

²¹ Will Kymlicka, “Community,” in *Blackwell Companion to Contemporary Political Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993) 366.

²² Will Kymlicka, “Community,” 137.

²³ Habermas, *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns*, vol. 2, 208-209 as referred in Fred Dallmayr, *Polis and Praxis: Exercises in Contemporary Political Theory*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1984), 234-235, 243; Fred Dallmayr, *Critical Encounters: Between Philosophy and Politics*, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987), 99; Fred Dallmayr, *Margins of Political Discourse*, (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989), 67.

²⁴ Cf. Thomas Pantham, “Some Dimensions of the Universality of Philosophical Hermeneutics: A Conversation with Hans-Georg Gadamer,” *Journal of Indian Council of Philosophical Research*, 9 (1992) 132 as quoted in Fred Dallmayr, *Beyond Orientalism: Essays on Cross-Cultural Encounter*. Indian edition, (New Delhi: Rawat Publications, 2001), xiii. Cf. also Gadamer, *Heideggers Wege: Studien zum Spätwerk* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1983) 17; Cf. also Gadamer, *Das Erbe Europas (The Legacy of Europe)* (Frankfurt-Main: Suhrkamp, 1989), 22.

²⁵ Fred Dallmayr, *Dialogue Among Civilizations: Some Exemplary Voices*. Palgrave: St. Martin's Press, 2002, Part I is a serious diagnosis of European malaise regarding its assumed and manipulative hegemony in knowledge, power and wealth. While referring to many European philosophers like Herder, Heidegger, Gadamer and Derrida - Dallmayr feels for his country and continent of origin and introduces reflectively the need for the West to open up and integrate the ‘other.’

²⁶ Cf. Sundara Rajan, *Towards A Critique of Cultural Reason*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987) 20, 22-24 as referred in Dallmayr, *Beyond Orientalism*, 163-165.

to counter the reductive approach of culture by modernity. Moreover, Dallmayr solicited an important dimension in cultural interconnectedness, namely, that of the dialogical characteristic in the process of culture as cultivation. In Taylor's own words: "The crucial feature of human life is its fundamentally dialogical character. We became full human agents, capable of understanding ourselves, and hence of defining our identity, through our acquisition of rich human languages of expression, the 'languages' of art, of gestures, of love, and the like."²⁷ In this way, these reflective judgments of Dallmayr endorsed culture as a source of ferment or contestation against standardization, homogenization, and global bureaucratization. Anticipating a barrage of questions regarding the concrete applications of culture and development, Dallmayr suggested that these cultural understandings and formative practices should be built up from the family and "civil society" that extends to schools, churches, universities and voluntary organizations.²⁸ Finally, Dallmayr repeatedly endorsed "lateral universalism" of the French phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty, in a cross-cultural context. In cross-cultural contacts or relations, it meant that there is no dominant culture or "'universalism from above' but rather culture emerges from mutual interlacing, questioning, and contestation."²⁹

5. CULTURAL ELEMENTS GLEANED

After a brief analysis of culture as understood in the world purview, it is important 'to pick and choose' the most important aspects of culture, as 'elements' that are inevitable and integral parts of culture. The salient elements of what we mean by 'culture' are:

1) NATURAL: In this aspect, culture is not something artificial but forms an integral part of being human. It is part of the nature of the world at large, of which humans form only a part. It is termed as 'natural' as opposed to 'artificial.' Culture is an integral element of being in this world, amidst many factors and living organisms. It also means that it is traditional and has been formed as part of any living encounter. It is for this reason that it is possible to pass on what is naturally true and vital from one generation to the next and so on.

2) IDENTITY: The crisis of the modern world was first of all a crisis of ideas, a crisis in the very idea of the human person. History was driven by culture and the ideas that formed cultures. Ideas had consequences. More so, if the idea of the human person was flawed, one of two things would happen. Either that culture would give birth to destructive aspirations, or it would be incapable of realizing its fondest hopes, even if it expressed them in the most nobly humanistic terms. The attack on people's good culture is an attack on the identity of the person. Culture mirrors the personality of a person. In the contexts of globalization and pluralism, it is one's culture that brings out one's uniqueness as a contributive

²⁷ Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," in Amy Gutmann, ed., *Multiculturalism and "The Politics of Recognition"* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992) 31-32 as quoted in Dallmayr, *Dialogue Among Civilizations*, 60; Cf. also, Dallmayr, *Alternative Visions*, 249.

²⁸ Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," 248-249.

²⁹ Dallmayr, *Achieving Our World*, 132.

element. It gives flavor to recognition. Culture always distinguishes one's rootedness from its dynamic elements of integration.

3) **FORMATION:** Culture is not static. It is full of energy and can bring out newer aspects and

Dimensions, in the context of present challenges. In other words, culture leads to formation and development that makes always changes possible in society. Many a view hold that culture is a kind of 'fixation' of ideas, expressions and manifestations; on the contrary, it is a source of change and growth. In other words, formation is in terms of valuable growth and development. It is in this sense, Dallmayr advocated "cultivation" as daily formation in culture. This implies daily effort towards self-formation or self-transformation in politics and culture too.

4) **IMMATERIAL:** Being an inner vitality, culture can not be merely physical or material.

Culture ennobles a person to raise himself up high in social standards. The immateriality of culture is something which makes the phenomenon of civility and civilization much sought after by any noble society. Immateriality refers in a direct way to the realm of the Spirit. In this regard, culture can be considered as spiritual in its nature and expression. The spiritual aspect includes religious, divine and mystical elements which are to be experienced and expressed in various ways.

6. IN DON BOSCO'S METHOD

Don Bosco as an educator had his humble beginnings in Becchi, Piedmont province in Northern unified Italy. He struggled to complete his schooling but then went on to become a priest in Turin. His own cultural background is Piedmontese, which is a tough and rough demeanour but full of religious faith. The political upheaval then was one of an unsettled Italy, still languishing under the Napoleonic legacy.³⁰ "The whole of the Italian *peninsula* in 1812 was a French dependency. But, while the South, in spite of French reforms, remained unsettled with an air of impermanence, the North, that is, the Kingdom of Italy extending from Milan to Venice and Bologna, was the scene of important and permanent reforms."³¹ The Napoleonic period attempted seriously to dispossess the Church; to make it a powerless society. "However, the Church, eventually stripped off much of its earthly power, survived through the strength of its spiritual power."³² It is in this climate of uncertainty that the educational ambience prevailed. During Don Bosco's time, Jansenism (of Port Royal of 16th century) and Naturalism (of J. J. Rousseau of 18th century) had a deep influence on the social and educational life of Northern Italy. These impacts were the result of the French cultural impact on the local Piedmontese life.³³ The culture of education and social life was so heavily dependent upon the environment of the times that Don Bosco did not fail to notice its importance when he opted to work for the young ruffians on the streets of Turin. So, he himself set out to create and safeguard the cultural aspects of Northern Italy of his time even though his boys frequenting his oratories lacked any of it. He worked out a religious, educational and social milieu that was suited best for his boys' growth. That culture was a combination of the situation, and the needs of and prospects for the youth, which can in best be described as a preventive system of education.

³⁰ Arthur J. Lenti, *Don Bosco History and Spirit*, Vol. 1: *Don Bosco's Formative Years in Historical Context*, Rome: LAS, 2007, 10.

³¹ Arthur J. Lenti, *Don Bosco History and Spirit*, Vol. 1, 11.

³² Arthur J. Lenti, *Don Bosco History and Spirit*, Vol. 1, 12.

³³ Abraham Panampara, "Some Philosophical Influences on Don Bosco's System of Education," in *Educating Don Bosco Way*, (Madras: Salesian Publications, 1978), 37.

As we have seen above and have gleaned out the salient elements of Culture, we find those elements can be applied in a parallel manner to the system of education and the culture of prevention in Don Bosco's educative approach. Therefore, the four elements can be discussed in the Salesian setting of Don Bosco's time and in the present context.

1) **Natural:** It refers to the use of reason, a capacity which is not only philosophical but basic human

capability. It also refers to reasonableness, a sort of common sense. This natural aspect of culture does not include any sort of complications, artificialities, exaggerations and formalism. Indeed, this natural use of reason should enable a person to pass on naturally the forms and art of life from one generation to the next. This what Don Bosco inculcated in his boys right from the beginning of his work among the street urchins and chimney boys. A reasonable approach and dialogue were always part of his system of education and he wanted his followers and Salesians to practise it in their apostolate among the youth. The use of reason as a method of education brings about order, regularity and understanding between the educator and the educand. The role of reason in his method acts like a bridge by means of checks of "reasoning (the rational need) from becoming individualist anarchism."³⁴ His method of education gives importance to reasonableness, "in formulating rules, in dealing with corrections and in applying sanctions,"³⁵ which in turn creates a natural environment for young people to live and learn well.

2) **Identity:** It refers to the individuality of every person that is to be developed and valued.

Culture, as we have seen, forms the personality of every human. Don Bosco, both as a seminarian and as a young priest, gave importance to the uniqueness of persons in his dealings and in the formation of the 'merry club' or 'club of cheerfulness.' Culture acts as a frame of reference for every individual in a society. Don Bosco made use of cultural activities such as, dramatics, music and work to give a self-identity and self-worth to persons he dealt with. The educator in the method of Don Bosco's system of education should safeguard the individual identity of every student in our institutions by knowing their identity well and by evoking in all young people their identity, through cultural means. This identity is one of interior maturity of the young person, especially using the holistic approach consisting of harmony with oneself, harmony with others and harmony with Transcendence.³⁶

3) **Formation:** Culture is seen more and more, not as a well-set or finished product, but as a dynamic tool for building up one's ability and attitude. As it has been observed by various thinkers, culture is a term used in the sense of cultivation or building up oneself and others in a civil society. Dallmayr would call it self-formation or self-transformation. This is an interesting method of approach and application in the educative efforts made for the young. Don Bosco used this perspective in forming his followers, to enable them to work for the youth of his times. In turn, it enabled the formation of the young as "good citizens and honest Christians." The cultural elements of his Christian Italian background made him work on the preventive system of education, so as to make the youngsters express themselves in a lively manner rather than repress themselves. This building up (*Bildung*) was worked out in three ways: "the (student's) emotional need for a trusting relationship is met with the kindness of the educator's rapport; the (student's) rational need for intellectual enquiry encounters the reasonable dialogue of the teacher; and finally, the (student's) spiritual need for personal and social happiness is inspired by the religious guidance

³⁴ Peter Gonsalves, *Don Bosco's Way. A South Asian Perspective*, Mumbai: Tej-Prasarini, 2011, 45.

³⁵ Peter Gonsalves, *Don Bosco's Way*, 47.

³⁶ Peter Gonsalves, *Don Bosco's Way*, 51.

of the educator.”³⁷ In this notion there are two aspects 1) loving and caring aspects, LOVING KINDNESS, A FAMILY SPIRIT or AMBIENCE and 2) learning to be skilled and talented, enhancing the other aspects of life.

4) Immaterial: Culture, in its essence, is immaterial. It is a way of life and a system of conduct. Even though, it includes material objects related to human activity, it is primarily and predominantly an interior build-up indicating the INTERIORITY or SPIRITUAL aspects. Herein, it is not just any RELIGION that is referred to as spiritual but rather it emphasises the interiorization of values and virtues, which make one fully human and fully alive. So, the sense of Transcendence or belief in the divine is a sort of cultural rootedness, which helps one to grow and to achieve one’s true worth and dignity. Hence, Don Bosco emphasised the moments of prayer, the sacrament of Confession and the Eucharist, devotions to the Blessed Sacrament, to Mary Help of Christians (“Don Bosco’s Madonna”) and to the Pope as vital cultural expressions and practices for every young person frequenting his oratory. The true care of the young person was revealed by Don Bosco through his motto: *Da mihi animas, caetera tolle*, which means, “Give me souls, take away the rest.” The spiritual care of the person is an inner attitude that every educator should possess so that every educand may benefit holistically in the system of education. By this educative approach the *atma* (soul) is sufficiently cared for too.

7. CONCLUSION

In the post-modern era, thinkers in the vast field of knowledge are willing to see *episteme* not only in terms of knowing by perception but by trans-perceptive cognition as well. This understanding can be viewed from the perspective of ‘wisdom.’ The salient nature of this broad and inclusive ground of thought brings in culture and cultural elements too. So, reflecting on Don Bosco’s method of education of the 19th century would help in meeting the challenges of the present day and avoiding educational pitfalls. As educators, Don Bosco’s holistic approach can be a source of inspiration and a greater impetus to action in serving the actual needs of the young. In conclusion, we can summarize the salient features of Don Bosco’s educational system or method follows:

- In Salesian Educational Internationalism, Don Bosco’s educational ideas and methods even in post-modern times are mostly practical, not theoretical, a way of practice or precepts rather than concepts. It is not a style but a way of life and witness.
- A Salesian Teacher must have a relatively “high level of personal dignity and self-mastery” or in other words, must be a ‘cultured person.’ This includes moral integrity and cultural adaptability.
- The work of a Salesian educator is a labour of love (or of the heart). It must be shown in loving those who are the beneficiaries. It is a mutual deal, reciprocal love and mutual respect.
- Don Bosco’s way of education is distinctly different in the sense of the modes of *Assistance* and *Accompaniment*. It includes providing, preventing, foreseeing, being friendly and helpful; it affirms a friendly presence among and with the young. It is a culture of journeying along, taking on the needs and wants of the young in a dynamic way.
- The ‘Bosconian’ approach and application is on family lines, with a family spirit and continuation of the family ambience in relationships, even at future levels or stages too. It is for this reason Don Bosco formed the *Association of the Past Pupils*.

³⁷ Peter Gonsalves, *Don Bosco’s Way*, 37.

In simpler terms, basically, the HEART of Educating the children and youth of India is in its *Culture of Loving kindness*, in the most natural and supernatural ways.