Discussion Post 1

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The beliefs shared by a group of people anywhere in the world forms their culture. Additionally, culture is formed based on collective ethnicity, customs, traditions, and values. Furthermore, culture depicts the thinking, practices, and views of the people it is shared by. The concept of cultural relativism can be understood by the following example. Darius, the king of Persia some 500 years BC, traveled extensively. During traveling, he came across Callatians, an Indian tribe that had the tradition of eating the meat of their dead family members. Later, he came across Greeks who practiced cremation contrary to burial which Darius had seen in his land. Darius was intrigued by both cultures and appreciated such variation between cultures. This is what cultural relativism is all about. It is about respecting the beliefs, norms, and practices of a culture and not judging it from the perspective of ethnocentrism. Everyone agrees to and accept this statement. However, there is a flip side to this acceptance. All over the world, different cultures allow and take pride in certain beliefs and practices that are unacceptable in the rest of the world. Therefore, I completely agree with the statement that "if cultural relativism is applied without discrimination, it can result in outcomes that are morally unacceptable". In western culture, women command a great deal of respect. However, the belief that women are meant to only perform household jobs is deeply ingrained in many Asian countries. This belief, when viewed from the western perspective, is questionable because it takes away the freedom, rights, and liberties of the women. Furthermore, in many African countries, the practice of female genital mutilation is prevalent. This abhorrent practice has serious healthcare complications for the female undergoing it. If these practices are allowed to flourish without any accountability, then mankind would be pushed towards stone-age. The world must not hand over an excuse to the communities practicing abhorrent acts by saying that it is their way of life. To truly understand the concept of cultural relativism, customs and beliefs must be questioned to understand why people of a certain culture practice them.