

B. A. Part - I - SOCIOLOGY

Paper - I (Principles of Sociology)

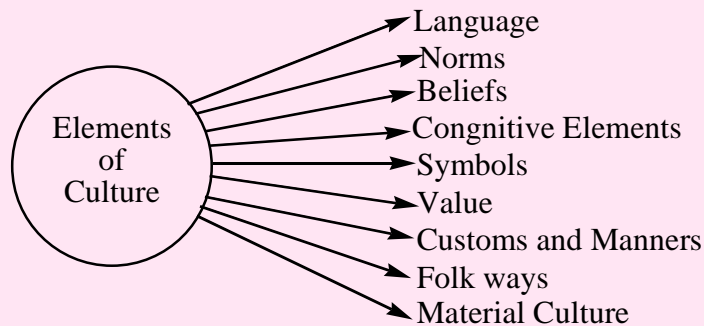
Topic : Elements and Functions of Culture
College : Magadh Mahila College, Patna
(Department of Sociology)

By : Dr. Archana Kumari
Email ID : archnakumari706@gmail.com
Mob. No. : 9835638936

ELEMENTS OF CULTURE

● Introduction

Cultures are rules and laws which are passed from one generation to the next generation. This is a basic definition from which culture can be explained theoretically but to define a culture more precisely we have to classify and name its basic element moreover the subjected elements are needed to be explained in detail, to describe and understand the deep and real sense of the term “culture”.



(1) **Language :** Language is the cornerstone of culture. All cultures have a spoken language even if written language is not developed. Each language can have several different dialects.

(2) **Norms :** Rules and expectations by which a society guides the behaviour of its members. These are the shared expectations of the people that govern their behavior.

- **Prescriptive norms :** What we should do .

- **Proscriptive norms :** Mandating what we should not do . Forbidding from certain actions.

(3) **Beliefs :** Specific statements that people hold to be true. Before the creation of any culture by a society, society decides their source of motivation, which they considered as appropriate.

For example : God is pleased by fasting on a particular day, Sikh wear bangle in one hand, keeping a dagger. The water of Ganga is sacred for Hindus.

(4) **Cognitive Elements :** Culture of all societies whether Pre - literate or literate include a vast amount of knowledge about the physical and social world. The possession of this knowledge is referred to as the cognitive elements.

(5) **Symbols** : Culture is system of symbols. Symbols are anything used to represent express and stand for an event situation. Sign direct to guide our behaviour. If is used to show an event of past present or future. A number of invented or artificial symbols are used in social life which assumes importance. Bowing head, whistling, winking of eyes situation all are the symbols, which express a specific object idea about other.,

Example : Flag, Anthem, Picture, Statues are symbols.

(6) **Value** : Values are society's ideas about what is good or bad, right or wrong such as the widespread belief that stealing immoral and unfair.

Culturally defined standards of desirability - what ought to be.

Example : Equal opportunity, Freedom, Justice and Democracy, Charity and Development, Environmental protection.

(7) **Customs and Manners** : Customs are common and establish practices. Manners are behaviours that are regarded as appropriate in a particular society. These indicate the rules of behaviour which enforce ideas of right and wrong. They can be the traditions, rules, written laws, etc.

(8) **Folkways** : Society's customs for routine, casual interaction. These are of less moral significance. People usually ignore the violation of folkways.

Example of Folkways : Proper dress common courtesy, To greet.

(9) **Material culture** : Another element of culture is the artifacts, or material objects, that constitute a society's material culture. if consists of objects that people make like –

Economic Infrastructure (Transportation, Communication and energy capabilities)

Social Infrastructure (Health, Housing and education system)

Financial infrastructure (Banking, insurance and financial services)

● **Function of Culture :**

We will review the functions that culture performs and assess whether culture can be a liability for an organization. Culture performs a number of functions within an organization .

(1) **Communication** : Culture provides the context for the development of human communication systems such as language both verbal and non verbal. (Gestures for example)

(2) **Perception** : Matsumoto (2007) argues culture gives “meaning to social situations, generating social roles and normative behaviours”, in other words, it shapes how we see and understand the social and natural worlds.

(3) **Identity** : Culture influences how people see themselves and others, in terms of ideas like gender, age and ethnicity. Durkheim (1912), for example, suggested societies have a functional requirement to develop two things -

(a) **Social Solidarity** : The belief we are connected into a large network of people who share certain beliefs, identities and commitments to each other. For such feelings of solidarity to develop, however, societies must create mechanisms of .

(b) **Social integration** : A feeling of commitment to others, such as family and friends, is needed to create a sense of individual and cultural purpose and cohesion. In a general sense, collective ceremonies and collective identifications represent integrating mechanisms.

(4) **Value systems** : Cultural institutions are a source of values and people's behaviour is, at the very best, conditioned by the cultural values they receive through the socialisation process.

(5) **Motivation** : Motivation relates to the ideal cultural values and norms involve sanctions (rewards and Punishments) for particular behaviours. Cultural values also set the behavioural boundaries in terms of maintaining certain standards of behaviour (laws, for example, specify behaviour that is right or wrong)

(6) **Stratification** : All cultures develop ways of differentiating between social groups on the basis of things like social class, social rank, gender, age and the like.

(7) **Production and consumption** : Culture defines what people "need, used and value" as part of the overall survival mechanism in any society.

● **Conclusion :**

At least we can say, the life long learning experience by which individuals develop human potential and learn patterns of their culture.