**Question:**  **Give an account of the functions of culture. (2017)**

**Answer:**

**Functions of Culture:**

**Introduction:** Man is rational, social as well as cultural animal. It is culture which helps the individuals to separate him from the other animals. Man cannot live without culture. Culture moulds his personality. Therefore, culture as social trait performs some functions for individuals and these are explained as follows.

1. **Culture provides knowledge:** Culture is called the treasury of knowledge. To live as social and human being, knowledge of society i.e. how to live, interact with others and to adapt social norms are most important. It is culture which preserves these aspects before coming of individuals in society. Unlike animals, man has greater ability to adapt the culture and through which he can modify his behavior. Culture provides people some necessary skill and knowledge and also helps them to transmit it from one generation to another through socialization process. Among various agents of transmission, the language as a part of culture plays a pivotal role to transfer and preserve the cultural traits.
2. **Culture Defines Situations:** Each culture has many subtle cues which define each situation. It reveals whether one should prepare to fight, run, laugh or make love. For example, suppose someone approaches you with right hand outstretched at waist level. What does this mean? That he wishes to shake hands in friendly greeting is perfectly obvious that he is familiar with our culture. But in another place or time the outstretched hand might mean hostility or warning. One does not know what to do in a situation until he defines the situation. Each society has its insults and fighting words. The hints which define situations appear in infinite variety. A person who moves from one society into another will spend many years misreading the cues.
3. **Culture defines Attitudes, Values and Goals:** Each person learns in his culture what is good, true, and beautiful. Attitudes, values and goals are defined by the culture. Attitude is tendencies to feel and act in certain ways. Values are measures of goodness or desirability; for example, we value private property, representative Government and many other things and experience. Goals are those attainments which our values define as worthy e.g. winning the race, gaining the affections of a particular girl, or becoming president of the firm. By approving certain goals and ridiculing others, the culture channels individual ambitions. In these ways culture determines the goals of life.
4. **Culture defines Myths, Legends, and the Supernatural:** Myths and legends are important part of every culture. They may inspire, reinforce effort and sacrifice and bring comfort in bereavement. Whether they are true is sociologically unimportant. Ghosts are real to people who believe in them and who act upon this belief. We cannot understand the behavior of any group without knowing something of the myths, legends, and supernatural beliefs they hold. Culture also provides the individual with a ready-made view of the universe. The nature of divine power and the important moral issues are defined by the culture. The individual does not have to select, but is trained in a Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim or some other religious tradition.
5. **Culture provides behavior Patterns:** The individual need not go through painful trial and error learning to know what foods can be eaten without poisoning himself or how to live among people without fear. He finds a ready-made set of patterns awaiting him which he needs only to learn and follow. The individual does not have to wonder how one secures a mate; he knows the procedure defined by his culture. If men use culture to advance their purposes, it seems clear also that a culture imposes limits on human and activities. A society without rules or norms to define right and wrong behavior would be very much like a heavily travelled street without traffic signs.
6. **Culture helps to develop the personality:** Culture has great impact on the personality of individuals. No child can develop the qualities of human being without help culture environment. It is culture which provides active grounds for group life. According to Ruth Benedict, in her book ‘*Pattern of Culture’,* where she analyzed three types culture of primitive society said that each culture has their different outlook. For this reasons, different type of personality grow up among the people in different society. Margaret Mead, an American sociologist said, “a culture shapes the character and behavior of individuals living in it ….”

**Conclusion:**

It is true that culture moulds the personality of the individuals. But it should be remembered that there is also some variations in society. Culture entirely cannot change the moods of all people. It is observed that though all people live together in same society but all are not follower of same culture. Every individual have their own personality and therefore, to some extent their culture is also unique.