**Paper 6.3**

**Question:**  **Define culture. Discuss in detail the importance of culture in the context of human social existence. (2014)**

**Answer:**

**Introduction:** Each community has own their culture. The term ‘culture’ is commonly used in all social sciences and specially in anthropology and sociology. It is not possible to separate culture from human society. Culture has much influence on social life of the people. It is indispensible for human civilization. Therefore, for the students of sociology it is very essential to know what culture is, what is its influence and how it shapes the society.

**Meaning:**

The English word ‘Culture’ is derived from the Latin term ‘cult or ‘Cultus’. The meaning of ‘Cultus’ is tilling or cultivating and worship. After the end of cultivating and refining the thing which comes out as products get our admiration and respect. Culture is a way of life for the people and the individuals learn this process through socialization. The food we eat, the clothes we wear, the language we speak in and the God we worship all are considered as part of our culture. In very simple terms, we can say that culture is the embodiment of the way in which we think and do things. As members of society we have inherited culture from our ancestors. All the achievements of human beings as members of social groups can be called culture. Art, music, literature, architecture, sculpture, philosophy, religion and science can be seen as aspects of culture. Culture also includes the customs, traditions, festivals, ways of living and one’s outlook on various issues of life. Culture thus refers to a human-made environment which includes all the material and nonmaterial products that are transmitted from one generation to the next. There is a general agreement among social scientists that culture consists of explicit and implicit patterns of behavior acquired by human beings. These may be transmitted through symbols; Culture is the expression of our nature in our modes of living and thinking. It may be seen in our literature, in religious practices, in recreation and enjoyment.

**Definitions:**

1. *“The culture of a society is the way of life of its members; the collection of ideas and habits which learn, share and transmit from generation” –* Edward T. Hall*.*
2. “*Culture is the totality of group ways of thought and action duly accepted and followed by a group of people.”* **---** A. F Walter
3. *“Culture is the totality of group of ways of thought and action duly accepted and followed by group of people.”*  **--** A. F Walter Paul.
4. *“Culture the embodiment in customs, tradition, etc. of the learning of the social group over the generation.”* ***--*** Lapiere.

Thus, from the above definitions we can come to the conclusion that culture is total way of life of the people that people follow in their day-today life. Culture includes every aspect of social life of the people. Culture is not imposed forcefully on the people; it is spontaneously accepted, practiced and transmits from one generation to another.

**Importance of culture in human life:**

Culture is indispensible trait for human being. It has great influence on human life. Culture has separated human being from other creatures. It plays a significant role molding the behavior of the people. Regarding the significant of culture some important points are mentioned as follows:

1. **Culture makes us human:** Culture is closely linked with life. It is not an add-on, an ornament that we as human beings can use. It is not merely a touch of color. It is what makes us human. Without culture, there would be no humans. Culture is made up of traditions, beliefs, and way of life, from the most spiritual to the most material. It gives us meaning, a way of leading our lives. Human beings are creators of culture and, at the same time, culture is what makes us human.
2. **Culture helps to create interfaith dialogue:** A fundamental element of culture is the issue of religious belief and its symbolic expression. We must value religious identity and be aware of current efforts to make progress in terms of interfaith dialogue, which is actually an intercultural dialogue.
3. **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.
4. **Culture helps to learn of mutual co-existence:** As the world is becoming more and more global and we coexist on a more global level we can’t just think there’s only one right way of living or that any one is valid. The need for coexistence makes the coexistence of cultures and beliefs. In order to not make such mistakes, the best thing we can do is get to know other cultures, while also getting to know our own. How can we dialogue with other cultures, if we don’t really know what our own culture is?
5. **Culture helps to be ethical being:** The three eternal and universal values of truth, beauty and goodness are closely linked with culture. It is culture that brings us closer to truth through philosophy and religion; it brings beauty in our lives through the Arts and makes us aesthetic beings; and it is culture that makes us ethical beings by bringing us closer to other human beings and teaching us the values of love, tolerance and peace.
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:**

We can come to the conclusion from above mentioned points that culture is plays an important role in society. Man is both social and cultural animal. Therefore, cultural traits cannot be separated from his social life. Culture designs every aspects of human life.