

**GENERIC COURSE**  
**SEMESTER 5<sup>TH</sup>**  
**GE-SOC-05**  
**BASICS OF SOCIOLOGY**

**UNIT-I**  
**INTRODUCING SOCIOLOGY**

**Definition, Meaning and Subject Matter**

1. **Auguste comte** defines sociology as a science of social phenomena, “subject to natural and invariable laws, the discovery of which is the object of investigation”
2. **L. T. Hobhouse**: “The subject matter of sociology is the interaction of human minds”.
3. **H.M.Johnson**: “Sociology is the science that deals with social groups; their internal forms or modes of organization, the process that tend to maintain or change these forms of organization and relations between groups”
4. **Ogburn and Nimkoff**: “Sociology is the scientific study of social life”.
5. **T Abel**: “Sociology is the scientific study of social relationships, their variety, their forms, whatever affects them and whatever they affect”.

**Meaning of Sociology:** Sociology is the study of man’s behaviour in groups or of the interaction among human beings, of social relationships and the process by which human group activity takes place. The word sociology is derived from the Latin word ‘societus’ meaning society and the Greek word ‘logos’ meaning study or science. The etymological meaning of ‘sociology’ is thus ‘the science of society’. Sociology is the youngest of the recognized social sciences. The term ‘sociology’ was coined by Auguste Comte in his book ‘Positive Philosophy’ published in 1838. The term implies the fact and programme of a science of society, comparable to the science of nature in its rigour, its method, its systematic interconnectedness and its freedom from emotion and ethical or aesthetic valuation. Sociology is the scientific study of human society and social behaviour. The subject matter of sociology is huge, complex and varied. The sociological perspective invites us to become strangers in the familiar landscape of our society. It allows us to look afresh at a world, we have always taken for granted, to examine our own surroundings with the same curiosity and fascination that we might bring to an exotic, alien culture. The basic insight of sociology is that human behaviour is largely shaped by the groups to which people belong and by the social interaction that takes place within those groups.

The main focus of sociology is the group, not the individual. The sociologist is mainly interested in the interaction between people-the ways in which people act towards, respond to, and influence one another. Sociology is distinguished by two characteristics: First, by its approach to phenomena-the approach of science, and second, by its subject matter i.e., human interaction. In brief, sociology is the scientific study of human interaction. Sociology, does not, however, study everything that happens in society or under social conditions. For example, sociologists study religion only in-so-far as it affects social relationships, i.e. the relationship of man to man, of one group to another, or of one group to the whole society. While dealing with the elements of 'human relationship' in diverse fields covered by various social sciences, sociology seeks to discover the inter-relationship of human activities in the fields-familial, education, economic, political or religious. The basic assumption on which the sociologists proceed is that what happens in any of these fields affects others. In other words, sociology is concerned with the 'whole' of human society, and not with the 'parts' which make up the 'whole'.

**Subject matter of sociology:** The main concern of sociology is sociological analysis. It means the sociology provides an analysis of human society and culture with a sociological perspective. Sociologist evinces his interest in the evolution of society and tries to reconstruct the major stages in the evolutionary process. An attempt is also made "to analyse the factors and forces underlying historical transformation of society". Sociology has given sufficient attention to the study of primary units of social life. In this area it is concerned with social acts and social relationships, individual personality, groups of all varieties, communities, associations, organization and populations. Sociology has been concerned with the development, structure and function of a wide variety of basic social institutions such as family and kinship, religion and property, economic, political, legal, educational and scientific, recreational and welfare, aesthetic and expressive institutions. Sociologists are concerned with the task of "formulating concepts, propositions and theories". Sociology has placed high premium on the method of research also. Contemporary sociology has tended to become more and more rational and empirical rather than philosophical and idealistic. The fundamental social processes such as cooperation and competition, accommodation and assimilation, social conflict including war and revolution; communication including opinion, formation, expression and change; social differentiation and stratification, socialisation and introduction, social control and deviance including crime, suicide, social integration and social change assume prominence in sociological studies. Now a days good number of specialized fields of enquiry are

emerging out. Sociology of knowledge, sociology of medicine, sociology of law etc represents such specialized fields. Sociology focuses on human interaction-on the mutual and reciprocal influencing by two or more people of each other's feelings, attitudes and actions. In other words, sociology does not so much focus on what occurs within people as it does on what transpires between people. Hence the focus of sociological enquiry is on people as social beings-their activities in relation to one another. Sociologists are interested in the way people structure their relationships, the manner in which their social ties with others are formed, sustained and changed.

### **Relationship of Sociology with other social sciences**

1. **Sociology and Anthropology:** Anthropology is as diversified subject as sociology, incorporating archaeology, physical anthropology, cultural history, many branches of linguistics, and the study of aspects of life of primitive man everywhere. Like psychology it has strong ties with the natural sciences, and in the case of physical anthropology, a close link with biology. It is as the science of culture that anthropology is more germane to sociology. Culture may be defined narrowly, to mean mainly the system of symbols, including language and values, shared by a given people. In that case we consider anthropology to have a distinct subject matter in the same sense that we consider power and authority to be subject matter of political science and the production and distribution of goods the distinctive matter of economics. But if culture is defined broadly to include all the patterned ways of doing things, including not only shared values but shared institutional arrangements, then anthropology becomes co-extensive with sociology. Nevertheless anthropology and sociology differ in that the former takes prime responsibility for studying primitive or-non-literate man, the later for more advanced civilizations. This basic fact exerts a pervasive influence on the content and subject matter of the two disciplines. Anthropologists tend to study societies in all their aspects as wholes. In so far as they specialize, it is usually in a given 'culture area', such as Melanesia. Sociologists more often study parts of a society, and generally specialize in some institution such as family, or a process such as social mobility. Anthropologists traditionally live in the community they study, directly observing behaviour or recording customs as reported by their informants. Their method of analysis is essentially qualitative and clinical. Sociologists more often rely on statistics and questionnaires; their analysis is more often formal and quantitative. The natural milieu for the anthropologist is the small

self-contained group or community, whereas the sociologist is quite at ease in studying larger-scale and impersonal organizations and processes.

2. **Sociology and History**: History seeks to establish the sequence in which events occurred; it is the arrangement of behaviour in time. Sociologists are much more concerned to show the relationship between events occurring more or less at the same time. Historians almost by definition, restrict themselves to study the past, often the more distant the better. Sociologists show much more interest in the contemporary seen or the recent past. Historians with the notable exception of those caked 'philosophers of History', as a rule eschew the exploration of causes; they are content to establish how things actually happened. Sociologists are much more likely to seek for the interrelations between events and to propose causal sequences. The historian prides himself on the explicitness, the concreteness of detail which characterized discipline. The sociologist is more likely to abstract from concrete reality, to categorize and generalize, to be interested in what is true not only of a particular people's history but of the histories of many different people. From the historian's perspective, this sociological process of abstracting from the history of several countries or periods is viewed as likely to distort the distinctive reality of *one* historical place or period. Much, perhaps most, of man's history has been written as the history of kings and wars. The history of less glamorous or exciting events, the changes through time in institutional forms such as landowning, or in social relations such as those of men and women in the family, have less frequently interested historians. Such relationships however lie at the centre of the sociologist's concern.

Despite these differences in emphasis, there are important bases for the concordance of history and sociology. Some historians have written social history-that is history which deals with human relations, social patterns, mores and customs, and important institutions other than monarchy and army, and some of the most outstanding sociological analysis, as in the work of Max Weber, has been applied to historical problems. Sociologists acknowledge historical sociology as one of the standard special fields of their discipline, and Sigmund Diamond, Robert Bellah and Norman Birnbaum may be pointed to as important contemporary practitioners.

3. **Sociology and Economics**: Economics is sometimes called the 'dismal science', a fact in which sociologists take some comfort whenever their discipline is dubbed 'the painful elaboration of the obvious'. Whatever comic relief this exchange of insults may give, it does not suffice to distinguish between economics and sociology as behavioural sciences. Economics is the study of the production and distribution of goods and services. As it

developed in the western world, largely under the influence of the classical school in England, Economics had dealt almost exclusively with the interrelations of purely economic variables: the relations of price and supply, money flows, input-output ratios and the like. Relatively little attention has been paid to the individual's actual economic behaviour or motivation, and only modest energy has gone into studying productive enterprises as social organizations. This left great gaps in our knowledge of economic life. More important, it left the discipline inadequate to account for the actual course of economic events. Recently economists have shown more interest in the motivation and in the institutional context of economic action. Nevertheless, many important problems, highly relevant to economics, have not yet become the object of concentrated economic research. Studies of the role of values and preferences in affecting the supply of labour, the influence exerted by prestige or customs on the price of goods, the origins and the motivations of entrepreneurs and managers, and the contribution of education to productivity have largely been left to sociologists and psychologists. Only a few hardcore economists have ventured to deal with them. Sociologists often envy the economists for the precision of their terminology, the exactness of their measures, the ease with which they can communicate with each other in a standard technical language, the extent of their agreement about certain basic principles, and their ability to translate the results of their theoretical work into practical suggestions having major implications for public policy. On the other hand the economists' record in predicting economic events is very imperfect indeed, presumably because they fail to give due weight to the factors such as individual motivation and institutional resistance, which the sociologists feel well-qualified to study. The parallels between the structure of economic and sociological thinking are nevertheless, many and striking. Most modern sociologists find the economist's way of thinking more congenial than that of the historian or the political theorist. Economists think, as do sociologists, in terms of sub-systems; they stress the relations between parts, especially patterns of dependence, dominance, exchange, and the like. Both are interested in measurement, often precise, and in relationships between sets of variables. Both are impressed with mathematical models as aids in analysing data.

4. **Sociology and psychology:** Psychology is often defined as the science of mind or of mental processes. Its studies encompass the capacities of the mind to receive sensations, to give them meaning, and to respond to them. Psychology has deep roots in biology and physiology, and remains closely tied to them. Much of the research by psychologists on visual and aural perception has little relevance for social behaviour. On the other hand,

studies of emotion, cognition, motivation, and the like, have an intimate connection with the individual's participation in social relationships. Studies of perception, learning, and other mental processes generally took for laws of psychic functioning which transcend the differences between individuals and even species, Those dealing with the emotions, feelings, and conative (striving) behaviour are more often concerned with the individual and the distinctive or unique organization of his personality. This is particularly true of 'clinical' psychologists. For those psychologists more concerned with the psyche than with physiology, the term 'personality' serves as a central organizing concept in much the same way as 'society' and 'social system' serve the sociologist. Psychology, in this perspective, seeks to explain behaviour as it is organized in an individual personality and determined by the combined influence of his physiology, his psychic apparatus, and his unique personal experience. By contrast sociology attempts to understand behaviour as it is organized in the society, and as it is determined by such factors as the number of people it contains, their culture, their objective situation and their social organization. Sociology and psychology draw closest in the special field of social psychology. From the psychological point of view, social psychology is concerned with the ways in which personality and behaviour are influenced by a person's social characteristics or his social setting. From a sociological perspective, social; psychology, includes any study of social processes which systematically considers how the psychological properties of every man, or the personality dispositions of particular men, acting in a situation influence the outcome of the social process. The distinction between the sociological and psychological perspective in social psychology often breaks down in the actual practice of research. In studies of public opinion, of mob action, of mass movements in politics or religion, it is often difficult to see any difference in the work of those who were sociologically trained as against those trained in psychology. Indeed, many argue that social psychology should be recognized a distinct field.

## **UNIT-II**

### **BASIC CONCEPTS**

#### **SOCIETY**

Society is the basic concept of sociology. It is the sum total of interactions among individuals. Thus, society is a group of people who share a common culture, occupy a specific territorial area and feel themselves to constitute a unified and distinct entity.

Maciver and Page: “Society is a system of usages and procedures, authority and mutual aid of many groupings and divisions of controls of human behaviour and liberties”

Giddens: “Society is the union itself, the organization, the sum of formal relations in which associating individuals are bound together”

### **Characteristics**

1. Population is large or small.
2. Mutual awareness and cooperation.
3. A territorial base or boundary.
4. A shared culture and minimal degree of value consensus.
5. Likeness and difference.
6. Psychic unity.
7. Cooperation and conflict.

In other words society symbolises a network of social relationship, i.e. a plurality of individuals existing in patterns of relationship and it is the most inclusive collectivity to which other collectivities extend.

### **Community**

Community is a small or large group in which people share no particular interest but the basic condition of life itself. The basic criterion of community is that all of one’s social relationships may be found within it.

Lundberg: “Community is a human population living within a geographical area and carrying on a common independent life”.

Kingsley Davis: “Community is a smallest territorial group that can embrace all aspects of social life”.

Talcott Parsons: “A community is that collectivity the members of which share a common territorial area as their base of operation for daily activities”.

### **Elements of Community**

1. Life is live wholly within the community. There exists self sufficiency.
2. It identifies itself with a territorial identity or locality.
3. Common culture and cultural self-sufficiency.
4. Community sentiment, we feeling, reciprocity and interdependence are basic elements.
5. Community growth is a natural growth and not a planned conscious effort.

Maciver argues that communities exist within great communities, the town within a region, the region within a nation and nation within a world community which perhaps is in process of development. Monastery, convent or prison are termed as community as they are territorially based and the functions of the inhabitants are restricted same as human functions which are limited by the nature of one's community. Similarly, immigrants group living in specific locality and own sub-culture are included in the category of distinct community whereas a social caste is not considered as a community because it has social coherence and lacks territorial basis. Territory, mutuality and organized interaction are three main characteristics of community. Community provides its members with stability, culture and power to resist radical changes.

### **Association**

Association are groups which are established in order to protect and enhance some specified interests or purpose through fixed rules, system of organization and formal manner. It can be temporary or permanent. Complex society tends to have plurality of associations whereas simple societies are just communities. There cannot be communities within associations but associations can be there within communities.

Maciver and Page: "An association is an organization deliberately formed for the collective pursuit of some interests or set of interests which its members share. According to them, associations develop systems of instruments for serving interests".

Bogards: "Association is usually working together of people to achieve some purposes".

Ginsberg: "An association is a group of social beings related to one another by the fact that they possess or have instituted in common organization with a view to secure a specific end".

#### **Characteristics**

1. Membership of association is formal.
2. Fixed rules for its functioning
3. Formed to achieve some goal or objective.
4. Office bearers are bound to their duties.
5. Apart from economic or political association, there are associations to serve humanity like NGO.

### **Institution**



An institution is an organized system of social relationships which embodies certain common values and procedures and meets certain basic need of the society. It includes behaviour, norms, values, ideals and system of social relationships.

Kingsley Davis: “Institutions are set of folkways, mores and laws interwoven around one or more functions forming part of social structure”. They are distinguished by closeness of their organisations and distinctiveness of their functions.

Sumner: “An institution consists of a concept (idea, notion, doctrine or interest) and a structure”. He has distinguished between crevice institutions and enacted institutions.

C. H. Cooley: “Institutions are complexes of norms established by society to deal in a required way, which seems to be fundamental needs”.

According to Parsons and Spencer, a social institution consists of all the structural components of a society through which the main concerns and activities are organized and social needs are met. An institution includes a set of behaviour patterns which have become highly standardized, a set of supporting mores, attitudes, values and a body of traditions, rituals and ceremonies, symbols and vestments and other paraphernalia.

### **Main Features**

1. Institutions are means of controlling individuals.
2. Institutions are formed on basis of customs and values.
3. Institutions are stable means of social control.
4. Role of institutions are followed by individuals.

The society is a system of institutions. Institutions are abstract. There are five primary institutions. They are the family, economy, religion, education and state. They are interrelated and change in one is bound to have impact on other. The primary institutions function in a manifest manner which gives rise to secondary institutions which function in a latent manner.

## **UNIT-III**

### **BASIC CONCEPTS-2**

#### **Social groups**

The term group has a specific definition in sociology that differs from everyday usage. Sociologically speaking, a group is a collection of people who interact regularly based on some shared interest and who develop some sense of belonging that sets them apart from other gatherings of people. They form a social relationship. This is sometimes referred to as developing a sense of “we-ness.” All groups share this factor of interdependence. People

who just happen to be in the same place at the same time are not a group. Rather, they are an aggregate. Individuals riding the bus or walking their dogs in a park are examples of aggregates. If these people interact and develop some sort of shared interests or sense of themselves as a group, then they become a group by definition.

**Primary Group:** According to Charles Horton Cooley (1864–1929), a primary group is a small social group whose members share personal and lasting relationships. Joined by primary relationships, people spend a great deal of time together; engage in a wide range of activities, and feel that they know one another pretty well. In short, they show real concern for one another. The family is every society’s most important primary group. Cooley called personal and tightly integrated groups “primary” because they are among the first groups we experience in life. In addition, family and friends have primary importance in the socialization process, shaping our attitudes, behavior, and social identity. Members of primary groups help one another in many ways, but they generally think of the group as an end in itself rather than as a means to some goal. In other words, we prefer to think that family and friendship link people who “belong together.” Members of a primary group also tend to view each other as unique and irreplaceable. Especially in the family, we are bound to others by emotion and loyalty. Brothers and sisters may not always get along, but they always remain “family.”

**Secondary Group:** In contrast to the primary group, the secondary group is a large and impersonal social group whose members pursue a specific goal or activity. In most respects, secondary groups have characteristic opposite to those of primary groups. Secondary relationships involve weak emotional ties and little personal knowledge of one another. Many secondary groups exist for only a short time, beginning and ending without particular significance. Students enrolled in the same course at a large university—who may or may not see one another again after the semester ends—are one example of a secondary group. Secondary groups include many more people than primary groups. For example, dozens or even hundreds of people may work together in the same company, yet most of them pay only passing attention to one another. In some cases, time may transform a group from secondary to primary, as with co-workers who share an office for many years and develop closer relationships. But generally, members of a secondary group do not think of themselves as “we.” Secondary ties need not be hostile or cold, of course. Interactions among students, co-workers, and business associates are often quite pleasant even if they are impersonal.

Unlike members of primary groups, who display a personal orientation, people in secondary groups have a goal orientation. Primary group members define each other according to who they are in terms of family ties or personal qualities, but people in secondary groups look to one another for *what* they are, that is, what they can do for each other. In secondary groups, we tend to “keep score,” aware of what we give others and what we receive in return. This goal orientation means that secondary group members usually remain formal and polite. In a secondary relationship, therefore, we ask the question “How are you?” without expecting a truthful answer.

**Reference Group:** Frequently, we use a reference group, a social group that serves as a point of reference in making evaluations and decisions regarding our own behaviour. A young man who imagines his family’s response to a woman he is dating is using his family as a reference group. A supervisor who tries to predict her employee’s reaction to a new vacation policy is using them in the same way. As these examples suggest, reference groups can be primary or secondary. In either case, our need to conform shows how other’s attitudes affect us. We also use groups that we do not belong to for reference. Being well prepared for a job interview means showing up dressed the way people in that company dress for work. Conforming to groups we do not belong to is a strategy to win acceptance by others and illustrates the process of anticipatory socialization.

### **Status**

In every society, people build their everyday lives using the idea of status, a social position that a person holds. In everyday use, the word status generally means “prestige,” as when we say that a college president has more “status” than a newly hired assistant professor. But sociologically speaking, both “president” and “professor” are statuses, or positions, within the collegiate organization. Status is part of our social identity and helps define our relationship to others. As Georg Simmel, one of the founders of sociology, once pointed out, before we can deal with anyone, we need to know who the person is.

**Status set:** Each of us holds many statuses at once. The term status set refers to all the statuses a person holds at a given time. A teenage girl may be a daughter to her parents, a sister to her brother, a student at her school, and a goalie on her soccer team. Status sets change over the life course. A child grows up to become a parent, a student graduates to become a lawyer, and a single person marries to become a husband or wife, sometimes

becoming single again as a result of death or divorce. Joining an organization or finding a job enlarges our status set; withdrawing from activities makes it smaller. Over a lifetime, people gain and lose dozens of statuses.

**Ascribed and achieved status:** Sociologists classify statuses in terms of how people attain them. An ascribed status is a social position a person receives at birth or takes on involuntarily later in life. Examples of ascribed statuses include being a daughter, a Cuban, a teenager, or a widower. Ascribed statuses are matters about which we have little or no choice. By contrast, an achieved status refers to a social position a person takes on voluntarily that reflects personal ability and effort. Achieved statuses in the United States include honors student, Olympic athlete, nurse, software writer, and thief. In the real world, of course, most statuses involve a combination of ascription and achievement. That is, people's ascribed statuses influence the statuses they achieve. People who achieve the status of lawyer, for example, are likely to share the ascribed benefit of being born into relatively well-off families. By the same token, many less desirable statuses, such as criminal, drug addict, or unemployed worker, are more easily achieved by people born into poverty.

## Role

A second important social structure is **role**, behaviour expected of someone who holds a particular status. A person holds a status and performs a role. For example, holding the status of student leads you to perform the role of attending classes and completing assignments. Both statuses and roles vary by culture. In the United States, the status of "uncle" refers to the brother of a mother or a father. In Vietnam, the word for "uncle" is different on the mother's and father's sides of the family, and the two men have different responsibilities. In every society, actual role performance varies with an individual's unique personality, and some societies permit more individual expression of a role than others.

**Role set:** Because we hold many statuses at once—a status set—everyday life is a mix of many roles. Robert Merton (1968) introduced the term **role set** to identify a number of roles attached to a single status. A global perspective shows that the roles people use to define their lives differ from society to society. In low-income countries, people spend fewer years as students, and family roles are often very important to social identity. In high-income nations, people spend more years as students, and family roles are typically less important to social identity.

**Role conflict and role strain:** People in modern, high-income nations juggle many responsibilities demanded by their various statuses and roles. As most mothers (and more and more fathers) can testify, the combination of parenting and working outside the home is physically and emotionally draining. Sociologists thus recognize **role conflict** as conflict among the roles connected to two or more statuses. We experience role conflict when we find ourselves pulled in various directions as we try to respond to the many statuses we hold. One response to role conflict is deciding that “something has to go.” More than one politician, for example, has decided not to run for office because of the conflicting demands of a hectic campaign schedule and family life. In other cases, people put off having children in order to stay on the “fast track” for career success. Even roles linked to a single status may make competing demands on us. **Role strain** refers to tension among the roles connected to a single status. A college professor may enjoy being friendly with students. At the same time, however, the professor must maintain the personal distance needed to evaluate students fairly. In short, performing the various roles attached to even one status can be something of a balancing act. One strategy for minimizing role conflict is separating parts of our lives so that we perform roles for one status at one time and place and carry out roles connected to another status in a completely different setting. A familiar example of this idea is deciding to “leave the job at work” before heading home to the family.

### Values

**Values** are culturally defined standards that people use to decide what is desirable, good, and beautiful and that serve as broad guidelines for social living. People who share a culture use values to make choices about how to live. Values are broad principles that support **beliefs**, specific thoughts or ideas that people hold to be true. In other words, values are abstract standards of goodness, and beliefs are particular matters that individuals consider true or false.

### Norms

Most people in the United States are eager to gossip about “who’s hot” and “who’s not.” Members of American Indian societies, however, typically condemn such behavior as rude and divisive. Both patterns illustrate the operation of **norms**, rules and expectations by which a society guides the behaviour of its members. In everyday life, people respond to each other with sanctions, rewards or punishments that encourage conformity to cultural norms.

### Mores and Folkways

William Graham Sumner, an early U.S. sociologist, recognized that some norms are more important to our lives than others. Sumner coined the term **mores** (pronounced “MORE-ayz”) to refer to norms that are widely observed and have great moral significance. Mores, which include taboos, are the norms in our society that insist, for example, that adults not walk around in public without wearing clothes. People pay less attention to **folkways**, norms for routine or casual interaction. Examples include ideas about appropriate greetings and proper dress. In short, mores distinguish between right and wrong, and folkways draw a line between right and rude. A man who does not wear a tie to a formal dinner party may raise eyebrows for violating folkways. If, however, he were to arrive at the party wearing only a tie, he would violate cultural mores and invite a more serious response. Mores and folkways are the basic rules of everyday life. Although we sometimes resist pressure to conform, we can see that norms make our dealings with others more orderly and predictable. Observing or breaking the rules of social life prompts a response from others in the form of either reward or punishment. Sanctions—whether an approving smile or a raised eyebrow—operate as a system of **social control**, attempts by society to regulate people’s thoughts and behavior. As we learn cultural norms, we gain the capacity to evaluate our own behavior. Doing wrong (say, downloading a term paper from the Internet) can cause both shame (the painful sense that others disapprove of our actions) and guilt (a negative judgment we make of ourselves). Of all living things, only cultural creatures can experience shame and guilt. This is probably what Mark Twain had in mind when he remarked that people “are the only animals that blush—or need to.”

## UNIT-IV

### CULTURE AND SOCIETY

#### Culture and Types

Culture is an extremely broad concept. To sociologists, culture is made up of all of the ideas, beliefs, behaviors, and products common to and defining, a group’s way of life. Culture encompasses everything humans create and have as they interact together. Culture is the ways of thinking, the ways of acting, and the material objects that together form a people’s way of life. Culture includes what we think, how we act, and what we own. Culture is both our link to the past and our guide to the future.

#### Types of Culture

The concept of culture is not easy to understand, perhaps because every aspect of our social lives is an expression of it and because familiarity produces a kind of nearsightedness

towards our own culture, making it difficult for us to take an analytical perspective toward our everyday social lives. Sociologists find it helpful to break down culture into separate components: material culture (objects), and nonmaterial culture (rules and shared beliefs).

**Material culture** *consists of human technology—all the things human beings make and use, from small, handheld tools to skyscrapers.* Without material culture, our species could not survive long because material culture provides a buffer between humans and their environment. Using it, human beings can protect themselves from environmental stresses, as when they build shelters and wear clothing to protect themselves from the cold or from strong sunlight. Even more important, humans use material culture to modify and exploit the environment. They build dams and irrigation canals, plant fields and forests, convert coal and oil into energy, and transform ores into versatile metals. Using material culture, our species has learned to cope with the most extreme environments and to survive and even to thrive on all continents and in all climates. Human beings have walked on the floor of the ocean and on the surface of the moon. No other creature can do this; none has our flexibility. Material culture has made human beings the dominant life-form on earth.

**Nonmaterial Culture:** *consists of the totality of knowledge, beliefs, values, and rules for appropriate behaviour.* The nonmaterial culture is structured by such institutions as the family, religion, education, economy, and government. Whereas material culture is made up of things that have a physical existence (they can be seen, touched, and so on), the elements of nonmaterial culture are the ideas associated with their use. Although engagement rings and birthday flowers have a material existence, they also reflect attitudes, beliefs, and values that are part of American culture, with rules for their appropriate use in specified situations. Norms are central elements of nonmaterial culture.

### **Cultural Processes**

**Assimilation:** Cultural assimilation is the process in which a minority group or culture comes to resemble a dominant group or assume the values, behaviours, and beliefs of another group. A conceptualization describes cultural assimilation as similar to acculturation while another merely considers the former as one of the latter's phases. Assimilation could also involve the so-called additive acculturation wherein, instead of replacing the ancestral culture, an individual expands their existing cultural repertoire. Cultural assimilation is the process by which a person or a group's language and/or culture come to resemble those of another group. The term is used to refer to both individuals and groups, and in the latter case it can refer to either immigrant diaspora or native residents that come to be culturally dominated by another

society. Assimilation may involve either a quick or gradual change depending on circumstances of the group. Full assimilation occurs when new members of a society become indistinguishable from members of the other group. Whether or not it is desirable for an immigrant group to assimilate is often disputed by both members of the group and those of the dominant society.

**Acculturation:** The exchange of cultural traits or cultural complexes depending on the nature of cultural contact is called diffusion but when a whole life is in a process of change under the influence of another culture we call it acculturation. Linton, Redfield, Herskovits and Hallowell have made important contribution towards the development of a body of explanatory concepts relating to acculturation. Acculturation may led to assimilation but very often it does not.

**Enculturation:** The concept was given by Herskovits. The process by which a society's culture is transmitted from generation to the next. Enculturation is the process by which people learn the dynamics of their surrounding culture and acquire values and norms appropriate or necessary in that culture and worldviews. As part of this process, the influences that limit, direct, or shape the individual include parents, other adults, and peers