

## CHAPTER IV

### PERSONALITY AND THE RELATION BETWEEN PERSONALITY AND CULTURE

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In the second chapter, we discussed the approach to Personality study adopted in this thesis. There it is suggested that we should speak of 'personality in culture' or 'culture and personality' approach of the study. Thus, emphasis is put here on the importance of the influence of cultural factors in the development of personality. In this chapter an attempt is made to define and understand what exactly personality means, what are its determinants and the role of culture in relation to personality.

## I. WHAT IS PERSONALITY ?

Etymologically the word personality is derived from Greek word 'Persona'. It originally denoted the theatrical mask first used by the actors to indicate the role played by them in Greek drama. The Greek term for mask was 'prosôpon' whose meaning was similar to persona. Some philologists think it a derivation from 'perisoma' (which means around the body). Some other Latin words are 'persum' (head or face) and 'perseuna' (self containing) from which this word is supposed to have been derived. In the writings of Cicero (106-43 B.C.) four different meanings of persona are found.

The meaning of personality as the assumed behaviour of an individual i.e. his role in life, persists in a few writings. Kreuger and Reckless(1) devote their discussion on personality to the social roles which the individual takes in life according to his age, social status or occupation. Modern thinkers refuse to identify the word personality with standard role of behaviour. Another conception

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1. Kreuger, E.T. and Reckless, W.C. : 'Social Psychology'. NY Longmans Green, 1931. p.333.

of personality equates it to the individual's effects on his fellows. "It is the response made by others to the individual as a stimulus that defines his personality"(2). Here by 'Personality' we usually mean that the individual has a quality which makes him attractive to others and prominent among all. It is a representative of the popular notion that a well built, impressive and robust individual has 'personality' while a rickety, meek and weak has no personality. This definition is not acceptable, for individual's behaviour differs from time to time and place to place. The change in individual's behaviour may be a result of change in situation and not in his characteristics. Valentine<sup>(3)</sup><sup>definition</sup> is a representative of the omnibus definitions. "Personality is the sum total of one's habit dispositions". Such definition is like defining the world as the sum total of everything in it.

Many writers emphasise the uniqueness or distinctive nature as the criteria of personality. According to them personality is individuality.

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2. May, M.A. : Foundations of Personality - in Achilles, P.S.(ed.) Psychology at Work, Ch.IV. New York, McGraw Hill. p.83.
  3. Valentine, P.F. : The Psychology of Personality. New York, Appleton Century, 1927.

Only the actions and ideas which differentiate the individual from his fellowmen constitute his personality. But individuals are not exactly alike nor they are unique. The individual is not unique in everything.

The right perspective and evaluation of personality can be had if we keep in mind what Kluckhohn, Murray and Schneider(4) pointed out that "Every man is in certain respects" -

- (i) like all other men
- (ii) Like some other men
- (iii) Like no other men".

Man, a member of *Homo Sapiens*, shares the qualities common to all humans and animals. As a member of social groups he has to adjust to other members of the group, behave in a traditionally defined way and have to sacrifice individuality and autonomy. Along with others he has to combat with the environment and physiological condition within the body. Human personalities are similar in so far as all have some common experiences in life.

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4. Kluckhohn, C., Murray, H. and Schneider, D.M.: Personality in Nature, Society and Culture. New York, A. A. Knopf, 1953. p.53.

'Like some other men' speaks about the similarity to the members of the same social, cultural group. It is obvious that people of the same class, tribe, nation or profession follow common ways of behaviour. People living in similar areas also possess and express similar qualities. Intellectuals and athletes world over have something in common.

In many respects man is like no other man. Each individual's mode of perceiving, feeling and behaving is characteristic. None of this pattern is precisely duplicated by those of any other individual. This characteristic behaviour is partly due to inherited biological equipment and partly due to <sup>the</sup> accidents met in his life. Accidents and experiences exert a typical impression on his life.

Personality is not merely a collection of behaviour patterns. Personality is a 'configuration', a 'Gestalt'. Traits are interrelated and integrated in a particular manner and look like a pattern. The same traits combine differently in different individuals according to their position as 'a point in the psychological field'. No two people represent exactly the same mixture of innate and environmental forces.

Thus, any individual is like others and also not like others. There is similarity as well as uniqueness. "Personality is the concept under which we subsume the individual's characteristic ideational, emotional and motor reactions and the characteristic organisation of these responses'(5).

The term 'characteristic' requires some explanation. 'Characteristic' is more a function of the individual than of the immediate situation. 'Characteristic' refers to a habitual way of thinking, feeling and doing. The casual and incidental forms of behaviour are not characteristic.

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5. Katz, D. and Schanck, R.L. : A Text Book of Social Psychology. New York, John Wiley, 1947. p.391.

Personality does not refer to occasional and momentary roles and actions. It refers to the comparatively stable or permanent way of behaviour which is more or less uniformly and consistently displayed.

## II. HOW PERSONALITY IS FORMED ? WHEN DOES PERSONALITY BEGIN ?

The human being is a unique creation. Cicero writes 'Nature has generated and fashioned man's body in such a way that some parts of it were perfect at birth, others were formed as its age increased, without much use of external and adventitious aids. But the faculty which is highest and most excellent in man she left lacking..... She furnished merely the rudiments and nothing more"(6).

In the process of formation of personality the human child starts with a 'typical' physical endowment. The human child is peculiar in three aspects viz. the basic characteristic of the protoplasm, innate mental equipment which consists of nervous system and cerebral cortex and the affective

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6. Allport, G. W. : Personality - A Psychological Interpretation. New York, Henry Holt, 1937. p.101.

aspect of the ductless glands. The man acts in the only way in which he is able to act, namely, in accordance with the biological equipment. Heredity and other constitutional factors as one of the determinant of personality are discussed at a later stage.

The new born child has no 'personality' as we understand the term. The neonate is just a lump of flesh with life. It finds expression in his manifold movements like kicking, throwing, hands and legs, up and down, crying and screaming. The period of first few weeks in the infant's life is a period of mass action and diffuse responses. If any part of the body - internal or external - is stimulated it causes movements and mass action with great frequency.

Since investigations on personality differ in their conception of personality they do not agree upon the period of its first appearance. Shirley(7) studied the children from their day of birth to the age of two years. She made careful

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7. Shirley, M. : The First Two Years, Vol.III.  
Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1933.



records of the temperament and social characteristics expressed by infants and concluded that "Traits are constant enough to make it possible that a nucleus of personality exists at birth and that this nucleus persists and grows, and determines to a certain extent the relative importance of various traits..."

But Shirley's results have been questioned. Gessel and Ames(8) on the basis of seventy-five judgements report that individuality traits are observable in first sixteen weeks, of life. And there is a high correlation between the traits of the child expressed at the age of one year and those expressed at the age of five years. On the basis of a careful study of the diaries kept by the parents Allport(9) suggests "the indication of personality in the fourth month. Infants seem to differ in relation to the intensity and frequency of their spontaneous activity and in their expression". However, there is a general agreement among the investigators in placing the beginning of personality before six months. It is not intended here to show that personality is

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8. Gessel, A. and Ames, L.B. : Early Evidence of Individuality. Scientific Monthly, 45 and 217-P. 217 225, 1937 as referred to by Katz, D. and Schanck, R.L. 'A Text Book of Social Psychology. P 469
  9. Allport, G.W. : Op.cit., p.121.

fixed in the early days of the infant. Personality is not rigidly fixed in the infant. But it has some personality which may be developed or radically altered by later experiences.

### III. MECHANISMS OF PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT

(A) There are two processes through which personality development takes place. One is the process of differentiation and integration, the other is that of maturation and learning. It is through these processes that behaviour patterns are inculcated and integrated.

The random and diffuse mass actions of the infant gradually become differentiated into specialised skills, and precise adaptive responses. Differentiation results from inhibition of accompanying useless movements, and these movements become precise and specific. Differentiation applies to the development of behaviour both through maturation as well as learning.

Maturation refers to the development of bodily structure and behavioural responses which are

not directly the result of training and experience. Learning refers to the change which is relatively permanent and in which the effect of previous experiences can be evidently seen. Maturation and learning are not antagonistic but complementary processes. Maturation provides the basis and learning works upon it. Efficiency and skill in motor as well as mental activities is the result of both maturation and learning. Conditioning, imitation, trial and error are the processes through which the individual learns.

Both the processes of differentiation and integration as well as maturation and learning work together. An example of differentiation in maturation is furnished by the studies of embryonic development made by Minkowski(10), Coronios(11) etc. Curti's(12) study of grasping and reaching responses of the infant is an illustration of differentiation through learning.

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10. Minkowski, M. : referred to by Katz, D. and Schanck, R.L. : A Text Book of Social Psychology. New York, John Wiley, 1947. p.480.
  11. Coronios, J.D. : Ibid., p.481.
  12. Curti, M. : Child Psychology. New York, Longmans Green, 1953.

Differentiation in personality emphasises the fact that the child is a complex of undifferentiated confused behaviour. His tension as well as emotional behaviour are totalised and imperative. He cannot control his responses. His responses lack co-ordination and patient skill.

(B) Integration :

It is through integration that adaptive responses become co-ordinated into larger more effective patterns. Integration takes place through inter-conditioning, reasoning, insight, or cross conditioning. There is a <sup>ie</sup> hierarchy of the levels in the ascending order of complexity, viz. conditioned reflex, habits, traits, and system of traits. Complete integration takes place through the interaction of reasoning and cross-conditioning. The studies of Allport and Vernon(13) and Cantril(14) suggest the trend of development towards consistency in behaviour. Thus personality is formed as the

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13. Allport, G.W. and Vernon, P.E. : Studies of Expressive Movements. Macmillan, 1953.
  14. Cantril, H. : General and Specific Attitudes. Psychological Monograph No.5, 1932.

result of progressive integration of all the systems of responses. The organised aggregate of the habits ~~of~~ which have been established in the individual constitute the bulk of his personality. It gives him form, structure and continuity. In an integrated personality the responses emerge as a pattern of behaviour which is automatically displayed by the individual faced with a particular ~~displayed~~ situation. "The truly unified individual is the man with cross-conditioned purposes of his own and who can adjust his interests to the variable world in which he lives"(15).

(C) The Consciousness of the Self :

The young infant is quite unaware of himself as a self. He has no bodily self, no social self, no material self. He cannot make distinction between 'me' and 'not me', 'mine' and 'not mine'. There is little or no ego-organisation. To an infant the boundaries between its body and the external objects and environment are not clearly defined.

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15. Katz, D. and Schanck, R.L. : A Text Book of Social Psychology. New York, John Wiley, 1947. p.486.

The early experiences of stimulation through senses make him vaguely aware for the first time of his existence as separate from other things.

The development of the self depends upon the acquired capacity of the individual to be an object to himself. The child is given a name and addressed with the name or personal pronoun. When the child is able to recognise this symbol his vague notion about himself becomes crystallised. Then the child calls himself 'I' and generalises all his wants and desires in terms of the ego symbol. Acquisition of language is an important process which hastens the consciousness of the self. It is through speech that the child is able to identify himself with his inmates. This identification becomes internalised into the thought. At this stage self is ready to be born. Through role taking and playing games the child learns to adopt the expectations of others. Out of such learning the self begins to take concrete form. "The individual becomes an object to himself only by taking the attitude of other individuals towards himself"(16). "The thing known

16. Mead, G. : Mind, Self and Society. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1934. p.138.

as the self is a selection and organisation of experiences involving visceral tensions, muscular strains, the sound of one's name, one's mirror image and so on; and the thing which knows this pattern is simply the organisation as a whole. If this is correct it is easy to see that the self being a primary source of many satisfactions must inevitably become a value"(17). The consciousness of the self is the subjective nucleus of the development of personality.

#### IV. DETERMINANTS OF PERSONALITY

Individual's personality is the growth of innumerable factors working in his life time. Kimball Young (18) has framed an analytical scheme of personality determinants embracing three main categories, viz., (i) constitutional characteristics, (ii) the culture under which the individual lives, and (iii) the unique social experiences of the individual. Similar is the analysis made by Kluckhohn,

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17. Murphy, G., Murphy, L. and Newcomb, T.M. : Experimental Social Psychology. New York, Harper, 1947. pp. 209-210.
  18. Young K. : Lectures in Individual and Social Adjustment. 1927.

Murray and Schneider(19). To this list ~~they add a~~ <sup>may be added.</sup> fourth factor, viz. physical environment. Hence, the determinants of personality are, biological, social, cultural and physical determinants.

Physical environment has not so much a direct effect on personality as it is a factor which acts as a limitation. Physical difficulties are culturally conditioned. Social factors refer to the social situations in the life time of the individual. The social situations are handled and viewed uniformly and in a set manner because of the influence of culture.

(A) Biological Determinants :

Biological factors are of two types, hereditary and congenital. Heredity refers to the qualities whose origin can be traced in the nature and manner of chromosomes. 'Heritage is the sum of all those qualities which are determined or caused by the germinal organisation"(20). Congenital

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19. Kluckhohn, C., Murray, H. and Schneider, D.M.(ed) Personality in Nature, Society and Culture. New York, A.A. Knopf, 1953. *Chapt II*
  20. Conklyn, E.G. : Heredity and Environment in the Development of Men. Princeton University, 1932, p.134.



factor refers to those qualities which are right from the birth but have nothing to do with the germ-plasm. The physical structure of the individual is the product of influence emanating from the germ-plasm. It directs and limits the development of the individual. "We are what we are largely because we inherit a definite type of nervous system"(21). Personality grows and develops as the result of the sequence of organised governmental processes in the brain from birth to death. Biological inheritance provides the stuff from which structure of personality is fashioned.

#### What Is Inherited ?

Biologically the child is a product of the union of germ cells from the father and the mother and starts its life as a little speck of jelly. These germ cells have a nucleus containing twenty four pairs of chromosomes. These chromosomes are made of a chemical element called genes, which are the carrier of heredity. The child inherits not the

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21. Mottram, V. H. : The Physical Basis of Personality. Pelican Books, 1949. p.68.

structure but the potentialities. The child inherits the strength of the brain nerves and nervous system. Certain physical and morphological characteristics like size and shape of the body and its limbs, facial features, the colour of eye, hair, skin, etc. and certain mental qualities like intelligence, general abilities and special abilities are also innate. The differences in the heredity is a responsible factor for the individual personality differences in the general development as well as in the achievement in special fields by the individual.

It is an obvious fact that individuals differ in the degree of intelligence. Differences in intellectual ability are reflected in their capacity for response to social-cultural conditioning. Various kinds of studies reveal that intelligence is an inherited fact. It is a function of the brain, germ-plasm. Comparison between the intelligence of identical twins reared together and reared apart shows a negligible difference in I.Q., while foster children reared apart or together differ much more in I.Q. than identical twins reared apart.(22).

22. Newman and others : Twins - A Study of Heredity and Environment. Chicago, <sup>Chicago</sup> University Press, 1937.

Innate differences in genetic structure carry with them differences in learning ability, reaction time, energy level, sensitivity to stimulation etc. Infants show certain characteristics which cannot be accorded as the result of training in respect to motility and temperament also.

Temperament to a certain extent is determined by the glandular function of the endocrine glands. The chemical structure of the glands affects the process, growth and metabolism of the body. The physical and mental deformities are produced as a result of disfunctioning of the glands. This in turn gives a colour to the attitudes of the individual towards life and things. "Probably evidence from gonads gives the strongest, the most certain grounds, for believing that <sup>the</sup> endocrine organs are potent in determining our personalities"(23).

Morphological characteristics like physique, height, weight, bodily proportion, physical beauty and even health and strength are the most obvious aspects of the individual. People and scientists

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23. Motttram, V.H. : The Physical Basis of Personality. Pelican Books, 1949. p.114.

persist in evaluating personality according to physical appearance. (Refer to Hippocrates's Kretschmer's and Sheldon's classification). The effect is mediated through the individual's conception of what he is physically like in comparison to his fellows. In a society where physical ~~power~~ prowess is adored a weakling would feel himself at disadvantage in comparison with others, who are physically stronger. Personality problems are often a function of the incongruity between varying phases of growth. There are individual differences in biological rhythm of menstruation cycle, of growth, of exaltation and depression. This affects the process of maturity. The role of constitutional factors is evident in the case of certain abnormal mental conditions which seem to run in the families. Certain diseases like diabetes are hereditary. Heredity also determines an individual's capacity for development and control of schizophrenia(24).

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24. Kallman, F. J. : The Genetic Theory of Schizophrenia - in Kluckhohn, C., Murray, H. and Schneider, D.M. (Ed). Personality in Nature, Society and Culture. New York, A.A. Knopf, 1953. p.94.

Though every biological fact is given a social meaning the stuff provided by heredity is not infinitely plastic. Dr. Wayne Dennis(25) observes, ~~that~~, "We must not infer that the fitting of man into social pattern is strictly analogous to the putting of wax into a mould. The metaphorical wax neurological glandular and otherwise which comprises the human individual has tendencies towards shape of its own". There is a contrast between manifestations which are results of biological maturation and those which are affected by social and cultural training. Some sort of behaviour will be manifested commonly by all beings regardless of how they have been trained. Kluckhohn(26) quotes the criticism made by one anthropologist about the over-emphasis put on cultural determinism by Margaret Mead in her 'Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Culturers' "..... But do you know any culture in which men have the babies ?" Culture cannot overturn the laws of nature.

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25. ~~Kallman, F. J. :~~ <sup>Kluckhohn, C. and others (ed):</sup> Op.cit., p.113.

26. Kluckhohn, C. : Mirror for Man. New York, Whittlesey House, 1949. p.204.

In spite of the importance of the biological and constitutional factors it is nonetheless to underrate the importance of social and cultural factors. The effect of the biological factors on the personality of the individual is not direct, and these factors themselves do not determine personality traits. There is also a limit to the effect of these factors. Biological and constitutional factors provided by heredity operate in certain social situations. Hereditary factors operate and are meaningful in relation to the environment. They depend directly on our experiences. A biological fact may be denied if the social custom is such. For example, Malinowski observes that in the Trobrianders even though a child may have physical features similar to those of his mother or maternal kin, the fact is denied and not accepted. They firmly believe that the child cannot have such similar features. Even to hint such is the case, is an offence.

Heredity determines the structure of an organ, the function of the organ is determined by the way it is put into use. Constitutional factors

are to a considerable extent social in their implication and can only be understood in relation to the fate they undergo in the process of social development.

Francis Galton(27) described the phrase 'Nature and Nurture' as "a jingle of words, for it separates under two distinct heads the innumerable elements of which personality is comprised.....

the one (nature) produces the infant such as it actually is, the other (nurture) affords the environment amid which the growth takes place by which natural tendencies may be strengthened or thwarted or wholly new ones implanted."

#### B. Social and Cultural Determinants of Personality :

The social and cultural factors are another group of determinants of personality. From birth to maturity the individual passes through the various stages of physiological and social development.

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27. Galton Francis : English Men of Science. p.12.  
N.Y. 1874

Along with that his physical and mental capacity to absorb the ideas and to work increases. He comes in contact with many persons, institutions, groups and situations. He imbibes the influences from these spheres. These impressions take the concrete shape and become the ingredients of the structure of his personality. Prior to the infant's earliest contacts it simply does not exist as a human being at all. As Ackerman(28) states, "Society is the nutritional medium in which the identity of a person gradually emerges. The substance of each society structures the content of that identity. As the individual matures he achieves an identity which is at once both individual and social. These two aspects of personality identity are represented in the more durable, less modifiable aspects of character structure. It reflects the organised consistent behaviour tendencies of the individual, those specific integrations of behaviour which have been conditioned by the interaction of biological disposition and early family conditioning. It is the core of personality, the more personal, private relatively fixed aspect of

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28. Ackerman : Social Role and Total Personality. Quoted in Thorpe and Schmuller - Personality - An Interdisciplinary Approach. New York, Van Nostrand, 1958. p.103.



the self." The reality the social and cultural factors and their influences cannot be discriminated. For, 'culture' is the way in which social factors operate. It is important to draw the distinction between the influence of the social and of the cultural factors, for the individual differences in personality are partly due to individual's typical experiences in social situations. In the structure of personality there is a distinction between the private aspect and the culturally typed aspect. The private aspect is partly <sup>the</sup> result of organic factors and partly <sup>the</sup> result of social and situational factors. A child may experience anxiety because it fears that its baby brother will take the mother's love. This is a private behaviour. A frustrated mother is over attached to her child and the child grows into an over dependent young man. This is a result of typical social situation in individual's life. Individual's history of social life produces in him peculiar traits and a way of emotional adjustment. Period of infancy, childhood etc. have been described as the individual's immediate social environment, 'key situations' by Sprott(29).

29. Sprott, W.J.H. : Social Psychology. London, Methuen, 1952. Chapter IX.

### C. Social Situations as Determinants :

1. Infancy : What happens in infancy has a profound effect on later life. Infants are not only bundles of appetites but they also have psychic needs to be satisfied. The early experiences are important because they come first and build up mental sets that condition later learning. During these years of life basic structure of personality is determined.

The cutting of the umbilical cord does not end the dependence of the child upon the mother. Because of his helplessness and dependence the way in which the child is handled by and the attitudes of the parents towards him affect his need for emotional contact and need for security. Besides the nature of the family, the number of the members in the family, <sup>the</sup> range of adult contact, the relationship of the child with his siblings, its sex, its position and place in the family etc. affect greatly the child's temperament and mind. The accidental situations for example, whether the child is an unwanted, or over protected, the first born or the only child, etc. are also significant factors. "It

is necessary", says Murphy(30) "to look into the give and take of feelings between parents and children". The responses to parents and to brothers and sisters which are tinged with deep emotions and feeling become the matrix from which the field of friendships and hostilities, dependent and autonomous social relationships will grow. Freud(31) illustrates that the church and the army derive their primal emotional control from the family structure in their very being. In the family situations are provided the setting, the stimulation and the guidance which determine very largely whether the child shall develop into a personality well adjusted and socially useful individual. Hence, the important function of family life is psychological. Family life meets certain basic human requirements more directly than is possible in any other area of life.

2. School Life : School, (the process and the system of education) is another important factor working powerfully in childhood, and hence, throughout

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30. Murphy, G. : Personality - A Biological Approach to Origins and Structures. p.842. N.Y. Harper, 1944
31. Freud, S. : Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego. Harper and Bros. 1947 London, Allen and Unwin, 1922

the life. School life is a continuity of home life. It is important for two reasons. One, the child which is rich in emotion and impatient and uncontrolled in its expression requires a tactful handling. Secondly, the school stage provides ample opportunities of new experiences and expressions of his interests. "If a teacher is aware of the emotional factors which are often involved in learning, she is in a much more favourable position than otherwise to guide her pupils successfully"(32). Class-room experiences and the type of curricular material presented both represent influences in the determination of individual's points of view, mental health and general personality pattern.

### 3. Adolescence and Marriage :

Adolescence is a period of swift changes whose effects are apparent in physical, emotional and social development. Period of adolescence is the most potent factor for two reasons; one, the individual becomes sexually mature which creates the

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32. Thorpe, L.P. and Scumuller, A. M. : Personality - An Interdisciplinary Approach. New York, Van Nostrand, 1958. p.190.

problem of 'social adjustment'. Secondly, it is a period of psychological weaning. New interests and attractions crop up and membership of various age, sex, and interest groups is open to the individual. There is a tendency to break away from the dependence of the parents and hence, arise conflicts between the new and the old generation. Canalisation of aggression is another social problem. The opportunities of satisfaction of sex are postponed to a very late time. Hence, the attitudes of the society towards sex and the way in which it is handled become important influential factors.

Marriage is a socially accepted way of satisfaction of sex. Secondly, married life affects the richness and healthiness of emotional life. It makes a great difference whether spouses live co-operatively and affectionately or live a quarrelsome life.

#### 4 Vocation :

Job is the hub of the wheel of life of the individual. Individual's family and social life, his friends and groups, interests and activities,

social and economic status, all are centred around the job or the profession he follows. The occupation brings with it social status and economic security. If a vocation is of man's choice it gives expression to his inner drives and interests, and hence, the man feels satisfied. Kind of vocation provides a healthy outlet for the man's phantasy and frustrations.

Marriage and profession bring the individual in active social life. He has to play many new roles at a time according to age, sex, class, caste, position in the family etc. The roles are not always complementary and mutually adjustable. It may give rise to personal conflict. These roles define individual's relationship to the total society and delimit his cultural participation.

Personality formation occurs through time as the individual organism organises his experiences to meet the demands of the immediate environment which is formed of group membership, roles and situational factors. Thus the nature of human personality is by the fact of social participation, but most of the meaning and richness of the social

approach can be grasped only when attention is given to each set of social arrangements, that is culture.

D. Culture as a Determinant :

The social scientists have a tendency to refer to the behaviour of the individuals as if it were only a microscopic reflection of the great society. The inquiry into the interdependence between culture and personality is at least as old as the fifth century B.C. when Greek physician Hippocrates\* wrote, "The same reasoning also applies to character. In such a climate arise wildness unsociability and spirit. For the frequent shocks to the mind impart wildness, destroying tameness and gentleness. For this reason I think, Europeans are also more courageous than Asiatics. For uniformity engenders slackness while variation fosters endurance in both - body and soul; rest and slackness are food for cowardice, endurance and exertion for bravery. Wherefore Europeans are more warlike and also because of their institutions not being under kings as are Asiatics. For I said above,

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\* As quoted by Kluckhohn, C., Murray, H. and Schneider, D.M. in 'Personality in Nature, Society and Culture.

when there are kings, there must be greatest cowards. For men's souls are enslaved, they refuse to run risks, readily and recklessly to increase the power of somebody else. But independent people taking risks on their own behalf and not on behalf of others are willing and eager to go into danger, for they themselves enjoy the prize of victory. So institutions contribute a great deal to the formation of courageousness".

Hippocrates's observations are based on general impression and are merely speculations. The modern investigators can get the help from the systematic investigations made by biologists, physicians, geographers, anthropologists, sociologists and psychologists.

#### E. Meaning of Cultural Determinism :

Cultural determinism means that all the individuals do not start in a vacuum in the marathon of life. The social situations and stages through which the individual passes are more or less defined with a definite meaning and are also understood practically in the same meaning by all. These are



the 'set situations' in which the objects, and how the individual would act or react to them are predetermined. To say in other words that the situations and objects and the behaviour towards them are culturally determined. Culture thus determines the situation, the place and time for satisfying individual's needs. Culture gives a concrete shape to the individual's understanding of the situation and structuralises his ways of thinking, feeling and behaving. Culture in one way affects by determining the specific content of the habits of the individual. It limits by general condition as to what is ugly or beautiful, acceptable or unacceptable, illegal or legal, right or wrong. Hence, the same situation or object may mean differently and arouse differential responses as it is given different meanings in different cultures.

Culture influences also through the effect of specific content carried by the mechanisms of behaviour upon those very mechanisms. For example, a child learns particular language. The language in turn limits and affects his manner of expression.

For long it was difficult for the Chinese to make written expressions of the pictographic language. Secondly, all men engage in activities which give them a living, but the manner of seeking that living affects the nature of personality. Whether an individual is settled or lives a nomadic life, whether he is a farmer or a mill worker, it affects differently and develops different personality traits.

In short, people living in different times, in different areas, speaking different languages carry on their living in different ways, hence behave differently and have different kinds of problems.

F. Three Ways in which Personality Characteristics are Influenced :

There are three ways in which personality characteristics are influenced. First, the type of government and social organisation limit the number and ways of the expression of personality characteristics. People living under democracy or dictatorship cultivate different characteristics. The regimentation

or liberal attitude adopted by the institutions develop entirely different modes of behaviour and habits in the members. A second aspect of relation of culture to personality ~~within the~~ is the range of variation in the trait of personality within the society. People also differ within the same society in respect of a particular trait or attitude. On that basis the society is thought more or less homogeneous. Thirdly, culture of a people may omit completely certain personality traits. The lacking of a personality trait in a particular society may be for the simple reason that the conditions of life in this society do not require its people to behave in a particular manner and form certain habits. The culture selects one of the possible ways of behaviour in its effort for adjustment. Even though many cultures lack certain personality traits, it is highly probable that many traits and habits will be found common in all human societies.

#### G. How Culture Operates ?

Culture operates over the individual and structuralises his behaviour through cultural patterns.

Individual's behaviour is patterned according to the patterns governing his group. Hence, likeness appears among the members of the same group.

Patterning is pre-requisite of social life, for without congruence between what different people do, believe and feel, social world would be impossible. Secondly, patterning prepares the individual for reciprocal functioning. It maintains the individual's position in the structure of interrelated systems. Thirdly, patterning has survival value and provides for the continuity of the traditions and mores. Fourthly, patterning supplies the members of a group with behaviour by which they are distinguished. Moreover, it provides the person with certain behaviours and values that serve to maintain the solidarity of the group.

Society not only provides the individual with the patterns of behaviour but also with the techniques of cultivating and imparting them. The culture determines how the ear will hear, eyes will see, and the tongue will speak, and also what they would hear, see or speak. The nature and management

of the cues is largely a social and cultural function. Gait, the handling of tools, other motor habits and as Sapir(33) says, even the mode of breathing and gestures bear the stamp of cultural patterning and cannot be understood as purely individual modes of behaviour. Psychic functions and psychic disorders are also culturally patterned. Certain characteristics of age, sex or biological relationship may be pre-requisite for the occupation of a particular position by the individual but the designation of such pre-requisite is a cultural matter. Individual's personality is in a broad way guided and controlled by the mores.

#### H. How the Child's Behaviour is Patterned ?

There are two processes of patterning viz., enculturation and socialisation. Enculturation refers to <sup>the</sup> individual's acquiring socially standardised overt and covert responses. It also means that culture cannot grow or continue or change apart from people who learn to behave in a standardised fashion.

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33. Sapir, E. : The Unconscious Patterning of Behaviour in Society in the Unconscious - A Symposium. Chicago, University Press, 1928.

Even the most deliberate unconventional person is unable to escape his culturing to any significant degree. Enculturation saves the time and energy of the individual, for he has not to invent or experiment the ways of behaviour. It has positively toned affective side too. Every time the individual feels that he knows what the appropriate pattern of behaviour in a given situation is. So he gets relief from anxiety, a sense of security from carrying it out.

Socialisation means a process of moulding the raw stuff of human nature in conformity with group patterns. The process of socialisation is complete when the norms originally the stimulus become the sustained pattern of his behaviour. During this process the child realises his 'self' and forms the concept of his conscience, i.e. super ego. The 'do's' and 'don't's' are internalised and the responses become natural to the individual. If the socialisation is complete the conscience will privately reward and punish the self in conformity with the cultural standards. Each socialised person

identifies himself with the value systems of his society and in turn he is disposed to judge others and train his children in terms of the system.

The form of behaviour is incorporated into the individual only when the individual feels ego-involvement. "Consistency of performance is greatest in those situations where there is ego-involvement"(34). Loyalties, value attachments are ego involved attitudes. The individual derives his personal identifications or ego-involvement in terms of his membership of <sup>the</sup> groups. The individual's personality can be assessed really only after he is placed in terms of his ego-involvement.

#### I. Categories of Basic Training :

An analysis of interplay of personality and culture reveals a continuous process of constant interaction between the two. The whole interplay of culture and personality can be summarised into a few categories of basic training.

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34. Sherif, M. and Cantril, H. : Psychology of Ego-involvement, Chapter 6. New York, John Wiley, 1947.

The first category is the social organisation. The degree of organisation of the group, the line of descent, patterning of age, sex, groups, economic system, place of women and men in society, etc. are a few factors involved in social organisation. Formation of basic habits in the infants is another important factor of culture play. It refers to the regulation and degree of rigidity in training, nursing, weaning, habits of elimination, walking, etc. Among other influential categories are the handling of frustration, aggression, anger and fear responses in the children as well as adults, the attitude towards them, affective responses like love, sympathy, co-operation etc. which refer to interpersonal relations, the kinds of sanctions, social and moral controls, attitudes towards sex and handling of adolescence and training in other skills. The nature and rise of the self which refer to the core of individual's personality depend also on many other factors like emphasis on ego drive, nature of personal goals and achievement, system of emotional security, rights and duties and rate of development to maturity.



The studies of culture and personality reveal that societies differ in basic cultural organisations and fundamental processes and basic habits. These differences in turn are related to self development and participation of the individual into the group life. Hence, we find that personality structures differ in different societies. Comparison of patterns for example, of child training and adolescence in different societies will illustrate the relation between cultural pattern and personality.

(1) Child Training and Personality :

There is a general saying 'as the twig is bent so grows the tree'. The important aspects in child training are the methods and attitudes towards nursing, swaddling, sphincter control, weaning etc.

If the child's needs of feeding are satisfied adequately and regularly the child feels the sense of security and is emotionally stable. Such a child tends to grow into a healthy co-operative and sociable personality. If the child is attended casually, intermittently and that not with affection and peace, his sense of security and emotional stability are frustrated.

Margaret Mead(35) writes, "The Arapesh of new Guinea treat a baby as a soft, vulnerable precious little object to be protected, fed and cherished..... When the mother walks about, she carries the child slung beneath her breasts in a bark cloth sling or in a soft net beg, in which the child still curls as it curled in the womb. Whenever it is willing to eat it is fed gently, interestingly". "The Mundugumor woman actively dislikes child bearing and they dislike children. The mothers nurse their children standing up pushing them away as soon as they are the least satisfied. The child is treated with hostility. Hence we find a character developing that stresses angry and eager avidity." "The Alorese mothers leave their children after about fourteen days and go to work. The tensions of the child are relieved by those who are present on the spot. Thus child's hunger is satisfied but, <sup>it is</sup> not attached to any single individual. So it grows up anxious, suspicious, mistrustful, lacking in confidence and no interest in the outside world"(36).

35. Mead, M.: Male and Female. New York, William Morrow & Co., 1949. pp. 65-69.

36. Kardiner, A. : The Psychological Frontiers of Society. New York, Columbia University Press, 1945. pp.145-150.

Proficiency in sphincter control is expected at different levels in different societies. In our society where the child is punishable for lapses it may arouse avoidance reaction, diffidence and exaggerated attention and importance to cleanliness. The effects are worse when it is practised in heightened emotional atmosphere. Secondly, in our civilised society where weaning is too early and sometimes forcible the child feels an emotional shock, and has to repress his sucking needs. In the child's mind the act of nursing and feeling of being loved are inseparable. So if the mother abruptly refuses to nurse him it becomes tantamount to a withdrawal of love. This situation creates a sense of guilt in the child's mind.

The range and nature of adult contact in a family is also a cultural set up. The Samoan children if they are uncomfortable with one set of adults they can go to another. In the Marquesans, if one father does not do what the child wants, he tries another. This gives rise to diffuse dependency, emotional warmth and stability. If the child fails with one adult he never feels being trapped.

Comparing the Indian and American ways of bringing up of the children Murphy, G.(37) writes, "Indian children are not exposed to much frustrations, pressure from others and conflict with authority". Recommending this attitude he advises his American fellows, "We talk about standards of living but their (Indian) acceptance of children can teach us something about standards of living together".

(2) Adolescence and Cultural Determinism :

Troubles of adolescence are culturally determined. It depends on two factors, the attitudes towards adolescence and secondly, how it is handled. Compared with the adolescent of the civilised world, the adolescent in the rural or the aboriginal tribes has very few troubles. Amongst us the transition from the stage of a dependant adolescent to that of a responsible adult is sudden and not gradual. He is unprepared for the responsibility thrown upon him. This change over for some is difficult to manage.

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37. Murphy, G. : In the Minds of Men. New York, Basic Books, 1953. p.58.

The attitude towards sex is responsible for the maladjustment in married life. The knowledge of sex in our society is considered to be 'dirty' in childhood ~~men~~ and adolescence, 'regrettable' in young manhood and womanhood. It at once becomes a 'joy' in married life. So when time of marital enjoyment comes many persons are ignorant and hold prejudices about it. In the Indian rural society such problems are few. For, children are regarded as having the same responsibility as the adult with an only consideration of not being able to do so much. Adolescence for them is not a different phase in life. They are prepared for marriage as a matter of course.

Dwelling upon the difference between the American and Samoan attitudes towards adolescence Margaret Mead(38) says that for a Samoan girl adolescence becomes not the most difficult or most stressful but the most pleasant time. Menstruation does not come as a shock. Its reasons, she traces in the casual attitude towards life, avoidance of

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38. Mead, M. : Coming of Age in Samoa. New York, William Morrow, 1928. pp.132-138.

conflict and of poignant situations of the culture. The reason of lower production of maladjusted individuals among the Samoans is the difference in the attitudes towards sex and education to children in matters pertaining to birth and death.

Anthropological studies have brought yet another point. Man and woman though biologically different need not be psychologically so. It was, and still now also, is used to believe that 'male' personality by nature is different from 'female'. But the so called 'masculine' and 'feminine' characteristics are not based on fundamental sex differences. They reflect the cultural conditioning of their societies. Sex and temperament are not necessarily connected only in one way (39,40).

#### J. Culture and Normality :

Culture and personality relation can be viewed still from another angle. What is <sup>a</sup>'normal' and what is <sup>an</sup>'abnormal' personality ? Abnormality

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- 39. Mead, M. : Male and Female. New York, William Morrow, 1950.
  - 40. Mead, M. : Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies. New York, William Morrow, 1952.

is a social and cultural concept. The very definition of normal and abnormal is relative to the cultural frame of reference. Abnormality, its structure and functions are patterned by group membership.

Psychologically abnormal process is an exaggeration of the normal process, and the resulting 'imbalance' in the proportion of functions is the criterion of abnormality. But is the psychically disordered person, an abnormal, i.e. a social misfit and a social liability? A psychically sick may or may not be treated as <sup>an</sup> abnormal. He is 'abnormal' in relation to his society. What is 'normal' in one society may not be so in the other. A man regarded <sup>as</sup> a misfit in one culture may be happily welcomed in the other. Social abnormality is relative to specific group. It is a departure from the standardised group norm, while psychiatric illness is independent of specific group. Researches (41) suggest that there are specialised psychological illnesses, i.e. certain disordered behaviours ~~is~~ <sup>are</sup> typically conditioned in certain communities. For

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41. Honingman, J. J. : Culture and Personality.  
New York, Harper & Brothers, 1954. pp. 375-410.

example, psychoses patterned with old age and menopause are differently patterned in different cultures. The character of neuroses, the behaviour in particular neuroses and the incidence of neuroses would differ from culture to culture.

K. Physical Conditions as  
a Part of Culture :

Like social situations physical conditions are also treated as an element of culture. The physical conditions are interpreted and utilised to assist the existence of life, or the life is such moulded as to adjust the circumstances(42). It illustrates how personality is the product of adaptation to both natural and social environment. The following illustrations of the Arapesh and the Eskimo cultures are examples which bring out the influence of the physical environment in developing certain personality traits.

The Arapesh is a semi-nomadic tribe who subsist through agriculture, trading and hunting.

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42. Mead, M. : Co-operation and Competition Among Primitive People. New York, McGraw Hill, 1937.



Though undernourished they produce enough food to avoid starvation. As the area is surrounded by the mountains, they are safe from external attacks. Since they have no danger from outside, and since they have not to face actual starvation, the Arapesh have no chances and need to form social organisations. Mountainous country and slippery rocks also hinder standardised group activity. Their relationships are personal and temporary. So there is poor growth of institutionalised life. Co-operative enterprises are personal in nature, hence not permanent. The non-competitive and individual nature of life has made for a weak development of the ego. The qualities of leadership in an individual are not praised. Aggressive individualism is an exception. The man possessing some special abilities is tolerated but not garlanded. The Arapesh personality can be characterised as mild, peaceful, co-operative, friendly, unstandardised and lacking in foresight.

The Eskimos who live in the Arctic regions face rigorous conditions of life. Every individual has to work hard and earn his own living. Those who cannot work have no right to live. Hence, <sup>the</sup> Eskimos

life is highly individualistic. Every family has its own part of the house and its own equipment. Eskimos change their houses in summer and winter. Hence, they are very careful about their own cooking and other amenities of life. Every body carries with him his own household equipments. Hence, communal celebrations and communal cooking are impractical. The individualism should not be confused with competitiveness. In such individualistic society where everybody has to depend on himself there is a marked development of the ego. Taboos are often violated and many rituals occasionally remain unobserved.

These illustrations are sufficient to show that physical and geographical conditions as an item of culture promote the growth of certain institutions. These institutions in turn determine the nature of personality.

#### V. THE NATURE OF CULTURAL RELATIVISM

"The extent of culturally determined differences is so, we can hardly point to a skill, practice or belief that fails to reveal the effects

of social milieu"(43). There are two views regarding the diversity of human practices. One is <sup>the</sup> absolutist view. It believes that an act is perceived right or wrong unconditionally and intrinsically. But this view is neither practical nor has factual evidence. The other view is relativism. It states that the principles of human relations are historically conditioned and relative to society. This view explains that the learning of customs and beliefs and values is a response to social stimulus. It is based on stimulus-response psychology.

Neither of this view has sufficient explanatory value. The idea of 'relational determinism' is a more fitting principle.

Relational determinism means that an act is judged to be right or wrong not in isolation but with reference to its place and setting. An action should be understood always as <sup>a</sup> part of given conditions. One act may be acceptable because it is fitting under one set of conditions. It may be

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43. Asch, S. E. : Social Psychology. New York, Prentice Hall, 1952. p.365.

unacceptable because it violates the requirement of another set of conditions. The psychological analysis of an act rests on four things : (a) the external conditions, (b) the meaning attached to the doer, (c) requirements and the evaluation and understanding of the situation, and (d) the resulting action. For example, there is a practice of killing infants or parents in some cultures. Such an act would be viewed differently under different conditions. It is not proper and sufficient to say that an act is relatively right or wrong. The practices and values which look contrary are not different because of diversity in ethical principles. They are different because they are the result of differences in <sup>the</sup> comprehension of the situations. It refers to the difference in 'situational meaning'. The African tribes killing the new born infant, believe that the just born child is still a fetus, and hence are not killing a 'life'. While to us such an act would be a social and legal wrong.

The first step in understanding an act or an idea is to establish the way in which it appears

to be right. Instead of comparing men and societies as they are it is more fruitful to study the tendencies they show in the course of change.

## VI. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Though the problem of personality is discussed by various kinds of thinkers and sciences there can be no doubt regarding the fact that social and cultural factors are important in personality development. Personality includes aspects in which the individual is (a) like all other men, (b) like some other men, and (c) like no other men. Personality of the individual is not a mere sum total of traits, but a dynamic integration.

Four factors - physical, biological, social and cultural - have been distinguished as the determinants of personality. The influence of biological, social and physical factors on personality cannot be understood without reference to cultural determinism. Culture affects the individual throughout life, and not just at one stage of development. Socialisation and enculturation are the processes

through which the individual's behaviour is patterned. A socialised and encultured individual in turn affects the patterns of culture, and the patterns change accordingly. Thus the relation between personality and culture is reciprocal. The psychology of the individual, his personality and culture are directly and intimately related. Thus personality is psycho-cultural.