

One way anthropologists look at culture is to subdivide the extremely complex CONCEPT of culture in to three “easier to understand” parts.

1. Our THINGS.

- This refers to our “material culture” or the physical elements/products of our culture.
- In our **lives** it means things like cars, houses, clothes, food, etc.
- In a **classroom** it means things like desks, pencil sharpeners, and computers.

2. Our ACTIONS and ACTIVITIES.

- This refers to the things that we do, our traditions, habits, and customs.
- In our **lives** it means things like shaking hands, going to movies, or playing sports.
- In a **classroom** it means things like raising our hands, standing in line, or sitting in a desk.

3. Our BELIEFS.

- This means our thoughts about what is important and what is unimportant, our knowledge and learning, our understanding of what is right and wrong, and our religions.
- In our **lives** this means our religions, our education, and our political beliefs.
- In a **classroom** this means things like respecting our teacher, wanting to have friends, and obeying rules.

APPLIED GEOGRAPHY

Real-world example and analysis →		
Artifacts	Sociofacts	Mentifacts

artifacts, sociofacts, and mentifacts

The traditional belief system of an Indian village was embedded in and partially revealed by the special treatment given to the son of the Gauda (the village headman) as described in the excerpt below.

The Gauda's son is eighteen months old. Every morning, a boy employed by the Gauda carries the Gauda's son through the streets of Gopalpur. The Gauda's son is clean; his clothing is elegant. When he is carried along the street, the old women stop their ceaseless grinding and pounding of grain and gather around. If the child wants something to play with, he is given it. If he cries, there is consternation. If he plays with another boy, watchful adults make sure that the other boy does nothing to annoy the Gauda's son.

Shielded by servants, protected and comforted by virtually everyone in the village, the Gauda's son soon learns that tears and rage will produce anything he wants. At the same time, he begins to learn that the same superiority which gives him license to direct others and to demand their services places him in a state of danger. The green mangoes eaten by all of the other children in the village will give him a fever; coarse and chewy substances are likely to give him a stomachache. While other children clothe themselves in mud and dirt, he finds himself constantly being washed. As a Brahmin (a religious leader), he is taught to avoid all forms of pollution and to carry out complicated daily rituals of bathing, eating, sleeping, and all other normal processes of life.

In time, the Gauda's son will enter school. He will sit motionless for hours, memorizing long passages from Sanskrit holy books and long poems in English and Urdu. He will learn to perform the rituals that are the duty of every Brahmin. He will bathe daily in the cold water of the private family well, reciting prayers and following a strict procedure. The gods in his house are major deities who must be worshipped every day, at length and with great care.

QUESTIONS:

- Identify ARTIFACTS of culture present in the reading above.
- Describe a SOCIOFACT presented in excerpt.
- What MENTIFACT is revealed by the reading?