

1. Details of Module and its structure

Module Detail	
Subject Name	Sociology
Course Name	Sociology 01 (Class XI, Semester - 1)
Module Name/Title	Culture: definition and dimensions – Part 2
Module Id	kesy_10402
Pre-requisites	Socialization & its Agencies -Family, Peer Group & School, Mass Media, other agencies
Objectives	After going through this lesson, the learners will be able to understand the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Culture2. Aspects and dimensions of culture3. Cultural change4. Socialization
Keyword	Culture, Socialization, Agencies of socialization

2. Development Team

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Socialization

What is meant by socialization? Let us try to figure out the concept. We all are born, societies already have established patterns of behaviour, regularity in systems and the way they are organised. These patterns are called as social institutions. Some of the examples of social institutions you have already discussed, such as family, religion, language etc. the process whereby some social practices and customs come to get established as socially acceptable practices and norms of a society is called as the process of institutionalisation. the sum total or the package of these social practices which exist in the form of customs, rituals, language, religion, tradition etc constitutes the culture of a society. these practices which have been established as acceptable ways of doing things are called as a way of life or culture of a society. People in any society are expected to follow these cultural practices and values that define the group. The process through which people learn about their culture is called as process of socialisation. The established practices are passed on to successive generations through socialisation. The process of socialisation ensures that individuals conform to the norms and values of the social group.

Let us look at some of the definitions given by sociologists.

According to Macionis “The life long process by which as individuals becomes the proper member of society and develops human characteristics.” Horton and Hunt define socialization as “ a learning process in which groups interact and learn social norms also develop his/her self. For Bogardus socialization is “A process of learning to live and work together is called socialisation.”

According to Ogburn: “It is the process of learning the norms of the group and society”. In yet another description, Maciver defines socialization as a “process through which social beings develops relationships and associations with each other.”

Now let us further elaborate this understanding. At the time of birth, an infant knows nothing about what we call society or social behaviour. Yet as the child grows up, s/he keeps learning not just about the physical world, but about what it means to be a good

or bad girl/boy. S/he knows what kind of behaviour will be appreciated and, what kind of behavior will be not be approved. Socialisation can be defined as the process whereby the infant gradually becomes self-aware, knowledgeable person, who has understanding of the ways of the culture into which s/he is born to some extent. Indeed without socialization an individual would not behave like a human being.

We have so far been talking about socialisation and the new-born infant. But the birth of a child also alters the lives of those who are responsible for its upbringing. They too undergo new learning experiences while raising up the child. Becoming parents or grand parents involves a whole set of new activities and experiences with the child. Older generation are parents when they become grandparents also. They combine various set of relationships connecting different generations with each other. Likewise the life of a young child in a family changes with the birth of a sibling. Socialisation is a life-long process even though the most critical process happens in the early years, the stage of primary socialisation. The process of socialisation can be divided into three stage:

Primary Socialisation: This is the first stage in process of socialisation wherein an infant begins to make sense of his surrounding. The socialisation of young child happens primarily within the family. or you may say family is the main agency of primary socialisation. Primary socialisation begins at birth and continues until the beginning of the formative years when the child begins to go to school or typically when he starts to interact with other members who are not part of hi/her family. This includes all the possible ways in which a child is moulded in to a social being who will interact with others in society and will follow the desirable behaviour patterns. The child learns his language, begins to understand and relate to food habits, dress patterns, and routine rituals and norms followed by the family.

Secondary Socialisation: Secondary socialisation occurs in schools. Schools teach formal subjects to children. But apart from curriculum children learn a lot of life skills and fundamental values in schools. These values and skills are, team work,

punctuality, disciplined life, cooperation, respect for elders, and peers, they learn that good work will be rewarded and there will be punishment for doing wrong. Schools socialise kids into adulthood. This is also called as hidden curriculum sometimes. But as learning and socialisation is a life long process, we continue to learn about aspects of life as we grow old, acquire different status, perform different roles and move from one stage to another in life.

Tertiary Socialisation: The third stage is called as tertiary socialisation or adult socialization, which continues through out our life. This is the stage when we work in cooperation or completion with others. Adults who grow up start earning for themselves, settle down in life, marry and have children, or lead their life as per their choice. All the events in the life of adults pose a set of interesting challenges. Very individual confronts these challenges in one way or the other. In the process they learn what is expected from them, how to cooperate with others in office, in business, in family, in neighbourhood, in society and so on. At this stage in life how individuals manage and cope with challenges depends upon their primary and secondary socialisation to large extent. The values that an individual learns in the formative years tend to influence his/her behaviour through out the life. Thus socialisation is a continuous process, it starts the day we are born and ends only when we die.

While socialisation has an important impact on individuals it is not a kind of ‘cultural programming’, in which the child absorbs passively the influences with which he or she comes into contact. Even the most recent new-born can assert her/his will. S/he will cry when hungry. And keep crying until those responsible for the infant’s care respond. You may have seen how normal, everyday schedules of the family get completely reorganised with the birth of a child.

In the previous modules we have discussed the concepts of status/role, social control, groups, social stratification, what is culture, norms and what values are. All these concepts will help us understand how the process of socialisation takes place. A child, in the first instance, is a member of a family. But s/he is also a member of a larger kin-

group (biradari, khaandaan, a clan etc.) consisting of brothers, sisters and other relatives of the parents. The family into which s/he is born may be a nuclear or extended family. It is also a member of a larger society such as a tribe or sub- caste, a clan or a biradari, a religious and linguistic group. Membership of these groups and institutions imposes certain behavioural norms and values on each member. Corresponding to these memberships there are roles that are performed, e.g. that of a son, a daughter, a grandchild or a student. These are multiple roles, which are performed simultaneously. The process of learning the norms, attitudes, values or behavioural patterns of these groups begins early in life and continues throughout one's life.

The norms and values may differ within a society in different families belonging to different castes, regions or social classes or religious groups according to whether one lives in a village or a city or one belongs to a tribe and if to a tribe, to which tribe. Indeed the very language that one speaks depends on the region one comes from. Whether the language is closer to a spoken dialect or to a standardised written form depends on the family and the socio-economic and cultural profile of the family.

Let us look at the functions of socialization and its contribution to society briefly.

1. It transmits culture from one generation to other thus maintaining cultural continuity.
2. Socialization converts humans from biological being to social being.
3. It contributes to personality development and helps to become disciplined. Socialization helps in determining goals and aspirations in social life.
4. It establishes knowledge, imparts skills and helps individuals understand and perform different roles.
5. It contributes in bringing the stability of individual personality and social order.

Agencies of Socialisation

The child is socialised by several agencies and institutions in which s/he participates, viz. family, school, peer group, neighbourhood, occupational group and by social class/caste, region, religion.

Family

Since family systems vary widely, the infants' experiences are by no means standard across cultures. While many of you may be living in what is termed a nuclear family with your parents and siblings, others may be living with extended family members. In the first case, parents may be key socialising agents but in the others grandparents, an uncle or a cousin may be more significant. Families have varying 'locations' within the overall institutions of a society. In most traditional societies, the family into which a person is born largely determines the individual's social position for the rest of his/her life. Even when social position is not inherited at birth in this way the region and social class of the family into which an individual is born affect patterns of socialisation quite sharply. Children pick up ways of behaviour characteristic of their parents or others in their neighbourhood or community.

Of course, few children simply take over in an unquestioning way the outlook of their parents. This is especially true in the contemporary world, in which change is so pervasive. Moreover, the very existence of a diversity of socialising agencies leads to many differences between the outlooks of children, adolescents and the parental generation. Can you identify any instance where you felt that what you learnt from the family was at variance from your peer group or maybe media or even school?

Activity 6

Suggest ways in which the child of a domestic worker would feel herself different from the child whose family her mother works for. Also, what are the things they might share or exchange?

To start with the obvious, one would have more money spent on clothes, the other might wear more bangles...

They might have watched the same serials, heard the same film songs... they might pick up different kinds of slang from each other...

Now you are left to follow up the difficult areas, like the sense of security within the family, the neighbourhood and on the street...

Activity 7

The presence or absence of which of the items below do you think would affect you most as an individual?

(possessions) television set/music system ...

(space) a room of your own...

(time) having to balance school with household or other work... (opportunities) travel, music classes...

(people around you)

Peer Groups

Another socialising agency is the peer group. Peer groups are friendship groups of children of a similar age. In some cultures, particularly small traditional societies, peer groups are formalised as age-grades. Even without formal age-grades, children over four or five usually spend a great deal of time in the company of friends of the same age. The word 'peer' means 'equal', and friendly relations established between young children do tend to be reasonably egalitarian. A forceful or physically strong child may to some extent try to dominate others. Yet there is a greater amount of give and take compared to the dependence inherent in the family situation. Because of their power, parents are able (in varying degrees) to enforce codes of conduct upon their children. In peer groups, by contrast, a child discovers a different kind of interaction, within which rules of behaviour can be tested out and explored.

Peer relationships often remain important throughout a person's life. Informal groups of people of similar ages at work, and in other contexts, are usually of enduring importance in shaping individuals' attitudes and behaviour.

Activity 8

Reflect on your own experience. Compare your interaction with friends to that of your parents and other elders. What is different? Does the earlier discussion on roles and status help you understand the difference?

Schools

School is a formal organization imparting education to children: there is a definite curriculum of subjects studied. Yet schools are agencies of socialisation in more subtle respects too. Alongside the formal curriculum there is what some sociologists have called a hidden curriculum conditioning children's learning. There are schools in both India and South Africa where girls, but rarely boys, are expected to sweep their classroom. In some schools efforts are made to counter this by making boys and girls do those tasks that are normally not expected of them. Can you think of examples that reflect both trends?

Mass Media

Mass media has increasingly become an essential part of our everyday life. While today the electronic media like the television is expanding, the print media continues to be of great importance. Even in the early print media in nineteenth century India, 'conduct-books' instructing women on how to be better house-keepers and more attentive wives were popular in many languages. The media can make the access to information more democratic. Electronic communication is something that can reach a village not connected by road and where no literacy centres have been set up.

There has been much research on the influence of television upon children and adults. A study in Britain showed that the time spent by children watching television is the equivalent of almost a hundred school days a year, and that adults are not far behind them. Apart from such quantitative aspects, what emerges from such research is not always conclusive in its implications. The link between on-screen violence and aggressive behaviour among children is still debated.

If one cannot predict how media influences people, what is certain is the extent of the influence, in terms of both information and exposure to areas of experience distant

from one's own. There is a sizeable audience for Indian television serials and films in countries like Nigeria, Afghanistan and among émigrés from Tibet. The televised Mahabharat was aired after dubbing in Tashkent, but even without dubbing was watched in London by children who spoke only English!

Activity 9

You might want to explore how people relate to serials set in surroundings unlike their own. Or if children are watching television with their grandparents, are there disagreements about which programmes are worth watching, and if so, what differences in viewpoint emerge? Are these differences gradually modified?

Other Agencies of socialization:

Besides the socialising agencies mentioned, there are other groups, or social contexts, in which individuals spend large parts of their lives. Work is, in all cultures, an important setting within which socialisation processes operate, although it is only in industrial societies that large numbers of people “go out to work” — that is, go each day to places of work quite separate from the home. In traditional communities many people tilled the land close to where they lived or had workshops in their dwellings (see visuals on page 43).

Look at the report and discuss how mass media influences children

The Shaktimaan serial telecast a few years ago had children trying to dive down buildings resulting in fatal accidents. “Learning by imitation is a method followed frequently by people and children are no different,” says clinical psychologist.

Socialisation and Individual Freedom

It is perhaps evident that socialisation in normal circumstances can never completely reduce people to conformity. Many factors encourage conflict. There may be conflicts between socialising agencies, between school and home, between home and peer groups. However, since the cultural settings in which we are born and come to

maturity so influence our behaviour, it might appear that we are robbed of any individuality or free will. Such a view is fundamentally mistaken. The fact that from birth to death we are involved in interaction with others certainly conditions our personalities, the values we hold, and the behaviour in which we engage. Yet socialisation is also at the origin of our very individuality and freedom. In the course of socialisation each of us develops a sense of self-identity, and the capacity for independent thought and action.

How Gendered is Socialisation?

We boys used the streets for so many different things — as a place to stand around watching, to run around and play, try out the manoeuvrability of our bikes. Not so for girls. As we noticed all the time, for girls the street was simply a means to get straight home from school. And even for this limited use of the street they always went in clusters, perhaps because behind their purposeful demeanour they carried the worst fears of being assaulted (Kumar 1986).

Activity 11

We have completed four chapters. Read the text of the next page carefully and discuss the following themes :

‘ The relation between individual and society in the girl’s rebellion against grown-ups.

‘ How the normative dimensions of culture are different in town and village?

‘ The question of ascribed status in that the priest’s daughter is permitted to touch.

‘ Conflict between socialising agencies for example in the text note: “thankful none of her school friends could see her like this”. Can you find any other sentence that illustrates this?

‘ Gendered = combing hair + escort + not playing football

‘ Punishment = “tight-lipped silence” + conspicuous absence of pappadams

An unusual sense of excitement pervaded her visit to the temple this evening. There had been an argument over lunch, between her and the grown-ups, when she had announced her decision to ring the bell in front of the sanctuary.

'If Thangam can ring it, so can I,' she debated hotly.

They protested in shocked voices. 'Thangam is the daughter of the temple priest, she is permitted to touch the bell.'

She responded angrily that Thangam came over to play hide-and-seek every afternoon and behaved no differently from any of them. 'Besides,' she added, goading them deliberately, 'we are equal in the eyes of god.' She was not quite sure whether they had heard this bit, for they had already turned away in disgust. But, after lunch, she caught them whispering about 'that horrid English school she goes to,' which meant that they had heard...

She was sure they had not taken her seriously. That was the trouble with grown-ups: they always presumed that if they told her that she would understand everything when she was older, she would accept their wisdom and authority unquestioningly and not dream of going against them. Oh well, she would show them, this time... Back again at the house, she had to endure the intensely uncomfortable ritual of hairdressing. Her grandmother soothed her hair with what felt like a whole jar of oil, separated each shining strand till it hung limp and straight and lifeless down her back, then tied it up in a tight, skin stretching knot on the top of her head. She was thankful none of her school friends could see her like this....

Why wouldn't they understand how ridiculous she felt, being escorted...She had reminded her mother many times that she walked alone to school everyday when they were back in town... [S]he noticed that the football game had already begun on the courtyard beside the temple of Krishna. She enjoyed watching the players, particularly since her obvious delight in the vigour of the game, and in the raucously voiced comments irritated Kelu Nair profoundly....

She came hurriedly upon the crowded main sanctuary... Before she could regret her decision or go back upon it, she elbowed herself quickly through the circle of women, nearly floundering on the slippery steps. The sight of the big bell above her touched her with a heady excitement. She could distinguish Kelu Nair's frantically whispered

threats, but she reached up, rang the bell with one resounding clang and was down the steps before he realised what was happening.

Dimly she was aware of dark looks and subdued murmurs pursuing her as she permitted Kelu Nair to drag her away... She was in dire disgrace. Their tight-lipped silence was infinitely more eloquent than speech, as was the conspicuous absence of her favourite tiny pappadams at dinner...

(From The Bell, by Gita Krishnakutty)