

## 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 3
Module Id	kesy_10403
Pre-requisites	Ethnocentrism, cosmopolitanism, and cultural change
Objectives	After going through this lesson, the learners will be able to understand the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Ethnocentrism</li><li>2. Cosmopolitanism</li><li>3. Cultural change</li></ol>
Keywords	Ethnocentrism, Cosmopolitanism, Aspects and dimensions of culture, Cultural change

## 2. Development Team

Role	Name	Affiliation
National MOOC Coordinator (NMC)	Prof. Amarendra P. Behera	CIET, NCERT, New Delhi
Program Coordinator	Dr. Mohd. Mamur Ali	CIET, NCERT, New Delhi
Course Coordinator (CC) / PI	Dr. Sheetal Sharma	Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi
Subject Matter Expert (SME)	Dr. Sheetal Sharma	Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi
Review Team	Ms. Abha Seth	DAV Public School, Sec B-1, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi

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## **Ethnocentrism**

Ethnocentrism is related to ethnicity. In order to understand what is meant by ethnocentrism, let us briefly discuss what is meant by ethnicity first.

Ethnic means relating to large groups of people classed according to common racial, national, tribal, religious, linguistic, or cultural origin or background. It means being a member of a specified ethnic group <an ethnic German>

Ethnic group, is a social group or category of the population that, in a larger society, is set apart and bound together by common ties of race, language, nationality, or culture. Ethnic diversity is one form of the social complexity found in most contemporary societies.

Ethnicity includes the sense of self consciousness of a group of people united by common language, religion, belief system, history, heritage, experiences etc. The ethnic identity of a group gives the members a sense of belonging. It has a set of symbols with which the members of a particular group express their solidarity and adhere to its rules and norms.

Ethnicity relates to ascriptive identities that an individual gets by virtue of birth such as religion, caste, language, and associated set of values, customs and rituals. Ethnic groups often attempt to place themselves in a superior status which results into conflict. The tendency to treat one's ethnicity as superior to the others is called as ethnocentrism.

Thus ethnicity refers to shared cultural practices, history, perspectives, experiences and cultural way of life that sets one group of people apart from another. Ethnic features and status is ascribed. The ethnic differences add to cultural diversity of any country.

Almost all the countries in contemporary times are multicultural, or plural or one may say ethnically diverse. People from different ethnic groups and races live together on

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a common platform, under the umbrella of social equality and rights guaranteed by their respective constitutions. While ethnicity is about cultural differences, race refers to groups of people who have similar set of biologically traits of features. It is only when cultures come into contact with one another that the question of ethnocentrism arises. Ethnocentrism is the application of one's own cultural values in evaluating the behaviour and beliefs of people from other cultures. This means that the cultural values projected as the standard or norm are considered superior to that of the beliefs and values of other cultures. Ethnocentrism refers to the tendency of various ethnic groups to place their own cultural patterns at the core and above other cultural groups. It is a tendency to create hierarchy among cultural groups and to consider oneself as the best or superior and rest as inferior to their own cultural group. In such a situation each cultural group assumes itself to be superior than other, it is like taking for granted their own cultural superiority. While placing one's own culture in the centre this culture becomes a yardstick against which all other cultures are assessed as or measured as good, bad, inferior, superior, right or not right, high or low.

Creating hierarchy or ranking things one above the other is a general tendency among human beings. This begins from early stages of socialisation when we start to learn about cultural practices. Much of the process of socialisation and imparting values to young ones in the family involves comparing practices with other practices. And most of the time the families that teach their practices as better and superior as compared to other practices. Such as a child is taught about food habit, at this young age you can not expect the child to know about actual, scientific benefit of vegetarianism or non-vegetarianism, but he or she is taught that eating a particular type of food is better than the other. The child is given logic that his young mind can understand which may be far from reality. Such small instances together through out the life and learning tend to create a mind set which starts treating other cultural patterns, habits, institutions, systems, traditions, norms and values as inferior to his own. History is full of examples where particular communities, people or societies have glorified their nation, cultural practices, religion or language and value system. Thus there is a temptation to evaluate cultures in moral sense.

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Ethnocentrism can be understood from two dimensions. The first is that ethnocentrism promotes solidarity or social unity among followers of a particular culture. This group may consider itself to be superior than others, and this feeling encourages the sense of belongingness, or the idea of 'we' among the people. This collective feeling strengthens the existence of the domination of the group. The greater the solidarity among the members, more difficult it becomes to challenge the status of the group.

Secondly, if it promotes sense of solidarity among people on one hand, then ethnocentrism acts as a barrier in the process of cooperation between different groups. Due to the tendency of creating a hierarchy or ranking groups one above the other, the interaction between different groups is never peaceful, smooth or friendly. There is a tendency among various groups to suspect and disrespect each other that creates environment of general bitterness and hostility.

History is full of examples where horrific/fierce wars have been fought between nations in order to prove or establish their perceived or assumed cultural superiority. religious wars, racial conflicts, persecution of ethnic groups has been done in order to demonstrate cultural and ethnic superiority. Underlying ethnocentric comparisons is a sense of cultural superiority clearly demonstrated in colonial situations. Thomas Babbington Macaulay's famous Minute on Education (1835) to the East India Company in India exemplifies ethnocentrism when he says, 'We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern, a class of persons Indian in blood and colour but English in tastes, in opinions, morals and intellect' (quoted in Mukherji 1948/ 1979:87), (emphasis added).

### **Cosmopolitanism**

Ethnocentrism is the opposite of cosmopolitanism, which values other cultures for their difference. A cosmopolitan outlook does not seek to evaluate the values and beliefs of other people according to one's own. It celebrates and accommodates different cultural propensities within its fold and promotes cultural exchange and borrowings to enrich one's own culture. The English language has emerged as a leading vehicle of international communication through its constant inclusion of

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foreign words into its vocabulary. Again the popularity of Hindi film music can be attributed to its borrowings from western pop music as well as from different traditions of Indian folk and semi-classical forms like the bhangra and ghazal.

A modern society is appreciative of cultural difference and does not close its doors to cultural influences from abroad. But such influences are always incorporated in a distinctive way, which can combine with elements of indigenous culture. The English language despite its foreign inclusions does not become a separate language, nor does Hindi film music lose its character through borrowings. The absorption of diverse styles, forms, sounds and artifacts provides an identity to a cosmopolitan culture. In a global world where modern means of communication are shrinking distances between cultures, a cosmopolitan outlook allows diverse influences to enrich one's own culture.

Let us briefly look at the idea of cosmopolitanism. Cosmopolitanism is defined as composed of persons, constituents, or elements from all or many parts of the world, it means having worldwide rather than limited or provincial scope or bearing, or having wide international sophistication. If we try to use the concept of cosmopolitanism, we can say that greater cultural diversity has led to emergence of cosmopolitan outlook among people.

According to encyclopedia, The word 'cosmopolitan', which derives from the Greek word kosmopolitês ('citizen of the world'), has been used to describe a wide variety of important views in moral and socio-political philosophy. It means that all human beings, regardless of their social, cultural, political, regional, religious or any other affiliation, are (or can and should be) citizens in a single community. the idea of cosmopolitanism cuts across the territorial boundaries and treats the world as a place where diverse cultures coexist.

Cosmopolitanism is an ideology, which means that all human beings are part of or belong to a single unified community, based on shared morality. People, places, cities, and regions have been identified as cosmopolitan through out the history.

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Cosmopolitanism can also be seen as an ethical stand in which individuals engage with others in dialogue and understanding going beyond their regional positions. This means that individuals rise above their personal identities. Cosmopolitanism can be understood in various ways, as ethical stand point, in politics, as an outlook, in social and cultural spheres. Popularly seen as a cultural phenomenon, it is seen in identities and lifestyles.

As you are aware that in modern times and in present societies large number of people migrate from one place to another. In fact this is age of globalization, rapid and large scale migration is an inherent feature of process of globalization. With large number of people migrating all over the world, there is intermixing of cultures with one another. In other words, an individual from one culture goes and settles in another place where he experiences a different culture. One possible out come of this Interaction of cultures or intermixing of cultures is rise of cosmopolitanism or cultural change.

### **Cultural Change**

Societies can not remain static. As it is rightly said that only change is constant in this world. What is social change and what is meant by cultural change?

The term social change is used in order to indicate the transformation or alteration in nature and structure of society. Society is a web of human relationships and social institutions. Any change in the way these interactions or institutions are structured or the way they are functioning is called as social change. Social change is a process. Social change can be a result of any one factor or as a combination of multiple factors which can influence the existing patterns of social institutions and interactions. Any change in the established is thus labelled as social change.

Similarly, any change in the cultural patterns of given society is called as cultural change. As we have already discussed that culture is a way of life. We have also discussed about dimensions and aspects of culture. Culture includes language, food habits, dress patterns, norms, values, traditions, architectural styles, artefacts, history

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and what not. These dimensions are classified into material and non-material aspects of culture. Any change in these aspects that define our way of life is termed as cultural change.

Cultural change is the way in which societies change their patterns of culture. The impetus for change can be internal or external. In regard to internal causes, for instance, new methods of farming or agriculture can boost agricultural production, which can transform the nature of food consumption and quality of life of an agrarian community. On the other hand external intervention in the form of conquest or colonisation can also affect deep-seated changes in the cultural practices and behaviour of a society.

Cultural change can occur through changes in the natural environment, contact with other cultures or processes of adaptation. Changes in the natural environment or ecology can drastically alter the way of life of a people. When forest dwelling communities are deprived of access to the forest and its produce either because of legal restrictions or due to its decimation, it can have disastrous effects on the dwellers and their way of life. Tribal communities in North East India as well as in middle India have been the worst affected by the loss of forest resources.

Along with evolutionary change there can also be revolutionary change. When a culture is transformed rapidly and its values and meaning systems undergo a radical change then revolutionary change takes place. Revolutionary change can be initiated through political intervention, technological innovation or ecological transformation. The French Revolution (1789) transformed French society by destroying the estate system of ranking, abolishing the monarchy, and inculcating the values of liberty, equality and fraternity among its citizens. When a different understanding comes to prevail, culture change occurs. Recent years have seen an amazing expansion of the media, both electronic and print. Do you think the media has brought about an evolutionary or revolutionary change? We are familiar with the various dimensions of culture now. To return to the point we started with in Chapter 1 about the interplay between the individual and society, we now move on to the concept of socialisation.

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Notice the words in the box. Have you heard or used these words in your conversations?

‘Hinglish’ may soon conquer the world

Some of the Hinglish words in vogue include airdash (travel by air), chaddis (underpants), chai (Indian tea), crore (10 million), dacoit (thief), desi (local), dicky (boot), gora (white person), jungli (uncouth), lakh (100,000), lampat (thug), optical (spectacles), prepone (bring forward), stepney (spare tyre) and would-be (fiancé or fiancée). Hinglish contains many words and phrases that Britons or Americans may not easily understand, according to a report... Some are archaic, relics of the Raj, such as ‘pukka’. Others are newly coined, such as ‘time-pass’, meaning an activity that helps kill time. India’s success in attracting business has recently produced a new verb. Those whose jobs are outsourced to India are said to have been ‘Bangalored’.