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## Chapter 4

### Culture and Socialisation

#### ❖ Culture

- “Culture comprises inherited artifacts, goods, technical process, ideas, habits and values”. – Bronislaw Malinowsky
- Culture is a way of life. Every society has its own culture. It varies from society to society.
- Culture has evolved to include material aspects of life.

#### ❖ Development of Culture

- Culture arises from the adaptation of the people to their geographical surroundings and the knowledge acquired in order to tackle the problems.
- Culture has three dimensions: Cognitive and normative are non-material dimensions while material dimension focuses on the quality of life.
  - **Cognitive:** This refers to how we learn to process what we hear and see, by giving it meaning. Cognitive culture is transferred either through books or oral tradition, depending upon the type of society.
  - **Normative:** This refers to rules of conduct that guide social behaviour. It includes folkways, mores, customs, conventions and laws.
  - Laws are explicit and formal sanctions, applicable to the whole society.
  - **Material:** This includes any activity made possible by means of materials. Tools, technologies, machines, buildings and modes of transport are material aspects of culture.
  - Cultural lag is a situation created by gap between advances in technology and non-material dimensions in a society.
- The different social roles played by an individual create his/her **identity**. Various roles are differentiated on the basis of the language used by players.
- In a culture there can be many **sub-cultures** that are marked by style, taste and association.
- Sub-cultural groups can also function as cohesive units that impart an **identity** to all group members.
- **Cultural change** occurs through changes in natural environment, contact with other cultures and adaptation.
- Cultural change can be evolutionary and revolutionary.
- This change in the culture can produce a new type of fusion culture with the contact of the new culture without leaving its originality. This type of culture found in big cities is known as **cosmopolitanism**.  
Cosmopolitanism is a phenomenon of modernity and respects other cultures.



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- **Ethnocentrism** is an application of one's own cultural values while evaluating other cultures. This leads to the feeling of superiority of one's own culture.

#### ❖ **Socialisation**

- Socialisation is a process of absorption of cultural characteristics of the society that an individual lives in. It begins from infancy and continues throughout life.
- Family, school, peer groups and mass media are the four main agencies of socialisation.
- An individual first comes in contact of the family and learns behavioural characteristics by observing the behaviour of family members.
- School and peer groups are the other agencies that have strong role in making an individual a social being by giving him/her formal education, knowledge and practical experience of rules of behaviour.
- Mass media is accessible to most people these days and influences their behaviour to a great extent as it is not limited by political or geographical boundaries.
- Socialising agencies may have conflicting influences upon individuals, yet socialisation helps in the development of self-identity.

#### ❖ **Important Terms and Definitions**

- **Cultural Evolutionism:** A theory of culture, arguing that the culture in society has evolved through variation and natural selection.
- **Estates System:** A system of ranking practiced in the feudal societies of Europe based upon one's occupation.
- **Great Tradition:** The written form of cultural traits or traditions that are widely accepted by the educated and learned elites of a society.
- **Little Tradition:** The oral form of cultural traits or traditions which operate at the village or local level.
- **Self Image:** An image of a person as reflected in the eyes of others.
- **Subculture:** A group of people within a larger culture borrowing and distorting by exaggerating or inverting the symbols, values and beliefs of the larger culture to distinguish themselves.

