UNIT 3   AGENCIES OF SOCIALIZATION

Structure

3.1   INTRODUCTION

By now you must have become familiar with the term 'socialization' and how there is constant interaction of the individual with the society. You have also seen how the process of socialization enables a living organism to become a social being. As an ongoing process it continues from 'womb to tomb' and from generation to generation. Individuals are nurtured and shaped by various agencies in the society.

The purpose of this Unit is to introduce you to the various agencies of socialization and how each agency contributes to the moulding of an individual's personality. We all agree that individuals cannot live in isolation. S/he has a natural instinct for sociability. There is constant interaction with family members, peers, teachers, schoolmates, relatives and members of the community. In modern times with the advance in science and technology, we can also feel the influence of social media, networking, etc. It is this interaction with the society that makes her/him a human being. In this unit, we revisit the concept of socialization and the agencies of socialization at micro, meso and macro levels. We will also try to understand the process of socialization at each level.

3.2   OBJECTIVES

After going through this Unit, you should be able to:

●   identify the various agencies of socialization;

●   classify the agencies at micro, meso and macro level;

●   describe the process of socialization in family;

●   explain the role of various agencies in gender socialization;

●   discuss the role of school as an agency of socialization;

●   appreciate the role of a teacher in the process of socialization in schools;

●   name the different types of media used for the purpose of socialization; and

●   discuss the impact of media on socialization.

3.3   SOCIALIZATION: THE BASIC CONCEPT

"To exist is to change, to change is to mature, to mature is to go on creating oneself endlessly".

— Henri Bergson

You may wonder how the two opposing processes, i.e., 'to exist' and 'to change' can happen simultaneously. But therein lies the uniqueness of human development. It consists of opposing processes- on the one hand, it brings changes in the person, and on the other hand, her/his self remains the same. In the previous chapter, we discussed how an infant grows and matures to a responsible and knowledgeable person equipped with necessary skills and holding beliefs and values of culture into which s/he is born. It must have become clear by now how socialization helps an individual acquire the values of the group so as to get inducted to that particular group. Indeed socialization has a profound influence on the way we think, feel and act. "Man is not born human but to be made human" (Park). But that does not imply that we are robots who act according to commands of the socializing agents. We all are constantly constructing our 'self'. Our mind can reason and make choices. However, the lack of interaction with other members of the society may lead to disastrous consequences.

You must have heard of many tragic incidents of how isolation and deprivation of social experience cause irreparable damage to children. Details of such incidents can be found in the annals of abnormal child psychology like the case of Genie, who was locked in a room and tied to a potty chair when she was hardly 20 months. Since she was totally isolated from people for nearly twelve years and allowed to wallow in adverse conditions she had failed to acquire the use of language, the art of communication and showed little emotional responses to anything that went on around her. Genie's case is an example of frozen social development which can cause adverse effects on a personality.

The above incident clearly illustrates that socialization and interaction are very much essential for human beings to become 'human'. Very often misconception prevails that socialization is the same in all societies and is consistent within a particular society. It is very important to know that such notions are erroneous and need to be discarded. One must also acknowledge that socialization varies from society to society and from culture to culture. You may see the variation in the socialization process from infancy to adolescence; from adulthood to old age.

It may be difficult for you to accept the idea that it is socialization that gives shape to your thoughts, when all the while you have been taught that you are an individual personality and that you have your own interests, likes and dislikes. However, our expression of individual identity is always done in the socio- cultural context, i.e. who we are conditioned to a great extent by the agencies of socialization.

Several agencies and institutions with which a child is associated with her/his family, school, peer group, the neighbourhood, the occupational group and the social class contribute to the process of socialization. In childhood and adolescence, mostly it is the peer group that has profound influence on the individual where as in adulthood, it is the occupational group and the newly acquired family through marriage which play a major role in socialization. These agents impact the growing child and contribute in shaping each and every aspect of its development in conformity with the social and cultural aspirations and also the needs and demands of the society where s/he exists.

What determines human behaviour-Is it Nature (heredity) or Nurture (environment)? There have been many debates over this issue. Exhaustive studies on children have arrived at the conclusion that hereditary factors are vital for human 'equation' but at the same time, it is the individual's social interaction that makes her/him 'human'. Such interaction is made possible through observation, use of language for communication and other forms of contact and in this way, people learn to become members of the human community. These concepts are reinforced by theoretical inputs from Charles Horton Cooley, George Herbert Mead, and Jean Piaget who argue that children develop reasoning skills, morality, personality, and a sense of self through social observation, contact, and interaction.

The process of socialization, as we said earlier, is life long process that begins from birth and ends with death and is said to occur in two phases such as primary and secondary. The primary stage denotes the socialization in infancy and childhood during which period a child acquires the most intense form of cultural learning. This stage marks the acquisition of basic knowledge of language and behaviour patterns laying the foundation for all the learning which happens later.

Secondary socialization maps the period in later childhood and adolescence when the child receives training in institutional or formal settings such as school. This level runs parallel to primary socialization. But, unlike in the family settings where children are accepted unconditionally by parents, in schools they are trained to conform to authority. They learn to interact in large groups. Their exposure to new culture makes this phase more complex and challenging.

Some sociologists have added one more level- adult socialization. **Adult socialization** takes place in adulthood when individuals adapt to new roles such as that of a husband/wife /employee etc. according to their needs and wants.

3.4 AGENCIES OF SOCIALIZATION

Socialization cannot take place in a vacuum. Individuals, groups and institutions create the social context for socialization to take place. It is through these agencies that we learn and incorporate the values and norms of our culture. They also account for our positions in the social structure with respect to class, race and gender. The habits, skills, beliefs and standard of judgment that we learn in the socialization process enable us to become functional members of a society. However, the term 'functional' is coloured by the broader socio-cultural context. Bourdieu (1990) presents individual socialization as a process by which individuals are influenced by the class cultural milieu in which they are being reared.

The various agencies can be classified as formal/informal, active/passive or primary/ secondary. However, there is no clear demarcation as all of them are very much interrelated. We shall examine the various agencies at three levels, viz., micro level, meso level and macro level.

3.4.1 Micro Level Socialization: Family, Peer Group and Neighbourhood

Micro level entails small group interaction. This level is vital because face to face, intense, and intimate interaction forms the basic formulation. Under micro-level socialization, we will discuss the role played by family, peer group and neighbourhood.

Family

Socialization can be conceived as a succession of processes occurring at various stages of development with the family being the first and foremost enduring agency of socialization. The young child's relationship with her/his family is one of the most significant, fateful and determining influences on the child. The family is said to be the 'cradle of social virtues'. It is here that the child's orientation to core values like cooperation, tolerance, self sacrifice, love and affection occur. The way a child establishes her/his relationships for better or worse with the rest of the world later in life is shaped, to a great extent, by her/his primary socialization in the family.

The family as a basic social institution has always been regarded as a core component for the development of the individual as well as for the society and the mankind. An infant embarks on the journey of life with the love and care of his/her family. Again it is in the family context that he/she imbibes the first lessons of life and tries to imitate the habits, customs and behaviour patterns of her/his family members. According to Bourdieu, we inherit habitus from our families. Habitus refers to a set of dispositions that mark us as part of our social class: manners, speech patterns, vocabulary and articulation styles, bodily behaviour and postures. Our preference for particular interaction is determined, to a great extent, by our habitus.

As a key agency of socialization in all human societies, the family transforms a young infant into a member of human community and acts as the first medium for transmitting culture to children. It is the family that provides affection, protection and socialization which are the basic sources for a child during the crucial years. It is also the time when he/she learns the basic behavioural patterns, habits, attitudes, customs and conventions while interacting with family members .The family instills in him/her desirable social attitudes and mould in a manner that suits the family status, reputation and psyche. Also it is the family that determines, to a great extent, a child's race, language, religion, class, and political affiliation, all of which constitute the child's self-concept.

As a social institution, the family has to perform many functions. Functioning of the family has irreplaceable importance in the process of socialization of the individual as family orients the child to initial human behaviour patterns and initial interpersonal relationships. The process of socialization remains informal at this level. Some sociologists refer to family as a mini society that acts as a transmission belt between the individual and the society. You may have observed how child rearing practices differ from family to family. Each child is unique and is uniquely inducted to the culture of his family. But there is a common consensus that warm parent-child relationship contributes to positive development outcomes. A nurturing relationship, where parents are sensitive to the needs of their children and stimulate their curiosity, can contribute positive ways to socialize them.

The child's upbringing by the family members contributes to developing respect for elders, tolerance, and adaptability. On the other hand, if socialization in the family is done in the backdrop of mistrust, autocracy and conflicts, children growing up in such family would develop anti-social behaviour.

However, it may be noted that many other factors like size of the family, socio economic background, occupation of parents, over parenting, parental neglect, and parental pressure all can affect socialization of children. The behaviours that adults in the family encourage or discourage and the type of discipline that they impose upon also impact children's orientation to life.

The parental duties get shaped in different political and historical contexts .In Japan,

for instance, a mother's role is pivotal in the socialization of her children. From the time the child is born, she moulds her/his personality so that the child fits into the outer world. In our country it is the patriarchal system that guides family function. This system marks dominance of male and of female subservience in the family. Mostly, it is the father who is the bread winner, weilds power. The women are restricted to household chores. Since childhood is the most impressionable age, the young child, who observes the roles of her/his father, mother and other members, understands their roles and later plays those roles.

Family Socialization and Adolescents

"The middle level students do not want parents that are always around, but take comfort in the fact that their parents are always around"- (Crosnoe, 2001).

Adolescent socialization is considered in the context of adolescents' interpretation of their social world and social relationship. Compared to earlier stages of infancy and childhood, there is limited opportunity for parental socialization as adolescents tend to move away into a world where they are less under the control of their parents. At this stage, friendship becomes closer and more intimate; relationship with parents shifts to relationship with peers.

Adolescents' demand for more autonomy may result in increased conflicts with parents. We tend to attribute their rebellious nature to physiological changes like puberty but the truth is that such bursts of temper and role confusion are due to cultural inconsistency. Many of conflicts between parents and adolescents arise due to the way issues are framed or defined. It may also be due to difference in the expectations with regard to social norms and conventions. Parents tend to interpret issues on the basis of what is right or wrong according to social conventions. For adolescents, such matters are associated with personal choice. For example, a parent may be annoyed by the way her adolescent son/daughter keeps the room so untidy. But for the adolescent, it is a matter of choice.

Scholars have viewed adolescence as a time of self-exploration and self-identity. Adolescents repeatedly ask themselves "who am I?", "What is the role assigned to me?". Such questions bother them and create identity crisis. Erkison's (1968) theory captures vividly this identity crisis. Adolescents begin to form personal beliefs and set standards for themselves. However, family socialization continues to affect their perceptions.

Gender Socialization in the Family Context

'Rajita is a young cheerful girl studying in class VIII in Patna. She is an enthusiastic student. However, of late, she is not able to attend classes. Her mother has been ill and advised rest for a month. Her father has asked Rajita to take care of the household chores and look after her younger sister and brother. What should Rajita do? If she misses classes, she will not be able to appear for examination. If she goes to school, it will be against her father's wishes and invite anger. And who will look after her younger siblings, if she goes to school?

In rural India, there are many such cases like that of Ranjita who are helpless because of their gender roles. Our country has a progressive education policy with respect to gender. The need for education that fosters women empowerment has been reiterated in our National Policy on Education. However, the grim reality is that discrimination is still prevalent; the sex ratio is skewed; girls' dropout rate is still high.

Fig. 3.1

Activity I

What does this picture convey?

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We know that gender identity is one of the major milestones in human development. Even at an early age, the notion of gender gets established in the child's psyche. Gender socialization implies difference in the socialization of boys and girls. Family is the first and foremost agency where gender socialization takes place. In the course of family socialization, gender roles get demarcated. -'what boys and girls, and men and women are expected to do'.

In most parts of our country, the patriarchal system prevails. The unequal power relations between women and men in our society is all too obvious, whereby men are more dominant and women are often seen as subordinate and inferior to men. Boys are brought up in such a way as to conform to the male gender role, and girls that of female gender role. The practice of male-female dichotomy continues to segregate people . Actually, these gender roles are not innate but a social projection of biological sex differences. From early in life, children begin to experience gender based differentiation in all aspects of their life-be it health care nutrition, or education or their relationship with others. Not only children model parents' behaviour, very often they are taught what they should or should not do. The special value attached to the male child is all too obvious; be it through parental reactions, parental behaviour, family rituals, practices, celebrations, folklores or songs. Problems that girls encounter are generally reflections of male dominance and women's helplessness.

You may have also noticed that girls generally do more household chores than boys and the type of housework assigned to boys are different in nature. For example, usually it is the girl who is asked to help in the kitchen. Rarely do we come across a girl helping her father in the backyard or fixing up mechanical items in the house.

Parents exercise control over their conduct and behaviour. With the changing times attitudes also are changing. Today you can see many women rubbing shoulders with their male counterparts in all fields. Also they have started challenging male domination. As you may see, the gender discrimination is a bane creating barriers for women's development in our society. The need of the hour is to spread awareness about gender equality in our society.

Peer Group

Have you ever wondered why socializing role of a family declines as the child grows up? One reason may be that at this stage peer group interaction soon begins to make powerful effects. Suppose your peer preference is for rap or pop song, it is inevitable that you also would prefer to listen to that kind of music though you may be fond of classical or gazal. It is because peer groups have such a major impact on our socialization. Peer group is constituted by members who have some common characteristics such as age (same stage of development and maturity) or sex, etc. It includes playmates, family members, neighbours or companions in day care centres/ schools. Peers may also have interests and social position in common and hold close social proximity. For young adolescents, acceptance by peers is the most important aspect of socialization. Therefore they exhibit willingness to conform to the peer group and foster loyalty.

Peer group influence may be traced from the time a child is three or so when s/he begins to mingle with people outside the immediate family. From such an early age, children form meaningful relationships with their peers, who seem to exert influence on them. Since they mostly belong to the same age group, they tend to interact freely without inhibitions. This type of constant and unrestrained socialization with the peer group helps an individual acquire very important lessons. By becoming part of a peer group, children begin to break away from their parents' authority and learn to make friends and decisions on their own. If you happen to watch children at play you may observe how they incorporate various strategies like negotiation, dominance, leadership, cooperation, compromise, etc. without any directions from elders. Peer socialization equips them with the ability to understand the nuances of group interaction and act accordingly.

Peer influence is such that some children begin to challenge the dominant power of parents and family. It overshadows the parental influence as time goes on especially in the adolescent stage. When children realize that the standards of their peer group are not similar to the standards upheld by family they feel disillusioned. In rapidly changing societies parents are often heard complaining that their children are becoming more and more rebellious. This is true because the child refuses to accept parental authority blindly.

Peer and peer-oriented activities do become more important to the individual during adolescence. Though family continues to be the centre of teenager's social activities, she /he turns to the peer group for affection, sympathy and understanding. In their search for **identity** (finding the answers to the question, 'who am I'?), **autonomy** (discovering the self as separate and independent from other), it is the peer group that acts as a major source of support.

Adolescence also marks the onset of puberty and awareness of sexuality and sexual relations in life. Peer group socialization becomes linked to those important milestones. Curiosity about sex and sexuality is but natural and adolescents consult their peer group without any hesitation. At this stage the gender role socialization which was initiated in the family gets more reinforced.

It is interesting to observe peer influence reflected in the daily life activities of teenagers like their choice of clothing; their eating habits, hairstyles, hobbies, preference for particular type of music, games, sports, and so forth. No doubt parents are still the major source of support and inspiration for taking major decisions in life like choosing a career, life partner, etc.

Gender Socialization in Peer Groups

"Dolls are for girls. Guns are for boys."

"No boys are allowed in our game".

"Don't be silly you are a boy; you cannot play with Barbie dolls".

Very often children are heard making such statements while playing with their peers. It is interesting to note such gender socialization in peer groups. One important factor leading to gender stereotype in children is their interaction with the peer group.

If you happen to pass a school on your way, pause for a while, and observe the children in the playground. What would strike you most will be about how children form groups, the type of games they choose to engage in and the comradeship within the groups .Children exhibit marked preference for same-gendered groups. Boys tend to form larger groups, choose more physical activities and look for locations which are away from adults, or spots where there is less interference from adults. While girls prefer to play in small groups, prefer games which involve less physical activities and choose not to drift too much away from adult scrutiny. These tendencies reflect the stereotypical gender roles which they have been assigned.

Sometimes, peer influence is so much that the peer group gets the notorious label as 'United front of dangerous influence' underlying the negative influence of peers. But it should be borne in my mind that the developing individual is embedded in a social context where s/he experiences direct as well as indirect influences and both have a significant bearing on her/his socialization.

Neighbourhoods

Neighbourhood can be said to be a local social unit where there is constant interaction among people living near one another or people of the same locality. In such spatial units, face to face interactions frequently take place. In this sense they are local social units where children grow up. You may observe diverse set of people in your neighbourhood who differ in caste, class or religion or occupation. By interacting with such diverse set of people, you may be exposed to various customs and practices; various occupations that people pursue; the skills required for such occupations and also the qualities possessed by those members. The growing child may also imbibe values of discipline and orderly behaviour. Interactions are at both physical and social environment wherein children get easily affected. If the child is surrounded by people who are warm and cooperative, it will get definitely transmitted to him/her. On the other hand if the locality is peopled by aggressive and violent group, it is possible that such children may learn unsocial or anti-social behaviours.

It is easy to observe interdependence among people of the same locality. There may be individual differences. At the same time these residents of the same locality seek to realize common values share common traditions, folk ways and customs, socialize youth, and maintain effective social control. Thus you may understand that neighbourhood plays a major role in the socialization process.

Check Your Progress 1

Notes: (a) Write your answer in the space given below.

(b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of the unit.

i) Why do you think that socialization is vital for growing up?

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Activity 1

Talk to a few adolescents in your colony. Find out who they consider as their role models. Are they inspired by parents/close family members/relatives// teachers//celebrities from films, sports, arts, etc.? Write your reflection based on their inputs in the space provided.

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3.4.2 Meso Level Socialization: School, Religion, Social Class

Meso level units are intermediate size social units smaller than the ones at macro level but larger than the micro units like the family or the local community. It may include schools, educational institutions, political groups, etc. These organizations and institutions may not be as big as the global units but are beyond the personal experiences encountered in everyday life.

School

As a child grows, s/he is ushered into school where her/his contact with others also grows. The child's first day in school is one of the rites of passage into Meso level unit. It is worthwhile to remember that socialization of children from infancy to adolescence occurs at a very rapid rate with family and peers exerting greatest influence at the initial stage of infancy. Thereafter, it is the school which moulds the behaviour norms of the child.

School refers to a whole range of formal educational institutions. In the words of Brubacher 'school is an active, direct and formal agency of education and socialization". The school has been conceived with the purpose of giving 'heterogeneous society commonness'. School has to be seen as a conscience keeper of the society which is continuously striving to take humanity to the next higher levels of moral, intellectual and aesthetic development through engagement with children. Schools provide both formal and informal contexts for the students. The formal context is the one provided in the classroom wherein the content of socialization is determined by the curriculum and the teaching-learning process. The informal context can be perceived in the inter-personal relations of students with teachers and the peer group.

School is a miniature society where children of different families, different religions, different castes and economic status come together, take part in collective activities and learn to adjust to the society. It is in school that whatever the child has learnt hitherto through family, peer group or community gets stabilized.

As you can see, at school children are socialized with the aim of preparing them for life and to assume a role befitting a world beyond the micro units. Schools sort young people into adults' role which are considered appropriate for them, as well as to teach them the attitudes and skills that match these thoughts.

School socialization not only helps the growing child in gaining academic insights but also many values like the importance of punctuality, discipline, resilience, team work, cooperation, etc. Another significant role played by schools is with regards to gender socialization. Although the first lessons on gender are learnt from the family, yet it is at school that the child comprehends its various dimensions. The school becomes the most important agency at this stage; simultaneously he/she is introduced to the peer group in the school and neighbourhood.

The school system functions within the society and complies with society's demands. It serves the purpose of catalyst when there is a need for reform and dynamism At the same it keeps a check so that cultural values of a society do not get diluted. Children who are deprived of school education therefore will have only narrow socialization unlike their counterparts in schools who have scope for greater interaction, exposure and wider socialization.

Hidden curriculum is also used as a vehicle for socialization in school. Hidden curriculum as the term implies is what children learn other than the academic content from what they do or are expected to do. Teachers and classmates shape children's attitudes towards social class, gender etc. which get reflected in their behaviour. In this way, school as an agent plays a pivotal role in the socialization of children reinforcing the habits, values, and norms which are acquired from the family and at the same time exposing them to new realms of thoughts and deeds.

Teacher as an Agent of Change

Teacher is pivotal in imparting lessons on socialization to children. S/he holds a key position in the classroom for creating and maintaining a conducive environment. S/he plays multiple roles in moulding the personality of children. By transmitting knowledge, disseminating information, inculcating values, modeling ideal behaviour, resolving conflicts, communicating positive expectations, etc. a teacher contributes to children's learning.

Although the primary responsibility of a teacher is knowledge transmission, yet teacher is an active agent of socialization. Through constant interaction during the teaching learning process, an atmosphere of trust is created in the classroom, where children can express their ambitions, share their experiences, communicate their fears and anxieties and arrive at solutions. As mentioned earlier, the teacher, the learning environment and practices within the school coalesce to affirm roles and attitudes. During the formative years when children are at the elementary level the bond between children and teachers is very close like the one they have with their parents. They look upon their teacher as an ideal person. At the adolescent stage too the role of a teacher is not less significant. A positive relationship with teachers during their turbulent years can reduce aggression, anxiety and guide them to proactive behaviour. Studies document that emotionally supportive teachers encourage academic interest, motivation and positive self-concept and help adolescents steer through the period of "stress and storm".

A teacher influences in direct as well as indirect ways. S/he can augment the process of socialization in children by modeling behaviour, communicating expectations and by reinforcing positive behaviour. As facilitator of students' socialization into the learning environment, the teacher has the potential for bringing desirable change in behaviour. Her/his role expands beyond that of instructor while s/he is engaged in student socialization.

Teachers' role as change agents is not limited to school setting and their learners. It extends beyond the school walls into communities. Teachers can and should make

efforts to reach the communities and spread awareness about various aspects like healthy habits, child rights, girl's education, women empowerment, gender equality, environmental protection, use of technology, peace, democracy, socialism, etc.

Nevertheless, it is naive to conceive the teacher social relationship as one way or as a cause-effect relationship since both the partners continuously influence each other and socialize in a reciprocal relationship. Very often it is a great experience for teachers when their students come up with novel and innovative ideas or find unique ways to arrive at solutions.

In the present day teacher needs to have many skills in her/his armour to handle "new generation packages". It is crucial that teachers are unbiased, democratic, sensitive to individual needs and are capable to counteract gender stereotypes, adopt inclusive practices, avail opportunities to participate in diverse activities, weave care and acceptance for one another in the classroom, establish connection with parents and care givers and guide their students with compassion and kindness.

Religion

Emile Durkheim defines religion "as the unified system of beliefs and practices related to sacred things." Those who have common beliefs and practices are united into one single moral community through religion.

Both anthropologists as well as sociologists consider religion as an inseparable part of our social being. Religion shapes collective belief into collective identity. You must have noticed how religious rituals like weddings, burials, birth day celebration and festivals bring people together wherein they express solidarity with their groups. Members of a particular religious group enjoy a sense of belongingness. It is but natural that those who are outside the group feel alienated. As one of the potential agents of socialization, religion exposes its members to spiritual world view and coaxes them to venture into a larger society.

The diversity in our country with respect to religion is so astounding. Socialization processes and practices differ from one religion to another. In most cases, children adopt the religion of their parents. Each religion follows its own rites and rituals, customs, ceremonies, dress, language, beliefs, attitudes, etc. which are in variance with those of other religions. Within the sub systems too there are differences in everyday practices. Is it not amusing to watch marriage ceremonies in various religions; each one unique to each religion? These ideological differences are transmitted to the members of the different sects through the socializing process. Although of late the external symbols like the dress or language have become more or less uniform, yet there are differences in the process.

Religion inspires an individual to serve for the welfare of her/his community and society. Since the spiritual thread of religion is closely interwoven with an individual's life pattern, much of his/her behaviour is controlled by it. For example, children are taught various moral principles and values, which they have to adhere to in everyday transaction. A sense of fear is injected in their minds, whereby they would rather follow the rules and principles than face the consequences or punishment. Religion underlines the qualities of piety, truth, solidarity and harmony among human beings.

Unfortunately, many wars are fought in the name of religion. Though the underlying message of all religion is the belief in one supreme power, yet narrow minded and anti-social elements indulge in unethical and socially irresponsible activities bringing untold miseries to humanity. As social beings, it is our supreme duty to respect each religion's value, each member's preference for particular religious ideologies and, at the same time, celebrate secularism.

Social Class

The role of social class in socialization cannot be ignored. There is a close link between socialization and social class. Social class is neither legally defined nor religiously sanctioned. It is generally said to be a stratum of people occupying similar positions, wealth and income. Our society is sorted or layered into several social classes. The way society's resources are distributed is uneven across these layers. The top layers are occupied by people who have more resources and the lower layers are represented by people who have lesser resources. A social class is marked by a set of people who share similar status with regard to factors like wealth, income, education, and occupation. Each of these classes has its own beliefs, attitudes, opinions and world views. So it is but natural that a child born to a particular class will be socialized by the norms dictated by the social class, which, in turn, are guided by property relations. Here the class role becomes the primary determinant of the way socialization process is carried out and a potential agent in shaping the contours of individuals. Position in the class system virtually affects every aspect of life, be it education, political affiliation, job preference or sexual behaviour.

Social class is relevant even in the context of goal setting. Working class or lower class parents teach their children that success is dependent on conforming to authority. But children of middle class are directed towards future goals. Their parents emphasize the need for success in studies and reinforce the function of schools as vital agencies of socialization. Within a particular social class child rearing practices may not be the same.

Sometimes children may be affected by difference in values upheld by the family and the school. At home cognitive development of a child is not given priority whereas in school academic performance is emphasized. Such children are in a state of perpetual confusion. Again, a relationship is seen between the occupational role of the father and the difference in the socialization-orientations of the children. For instance, since a working-class father enjoys less freedom and satisfaction in the work situation, s/he tends to be strict towards his family members, especially his son.

Check Your Progress 2

Notes: (a) Write your answer in the space given below.

(b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of the unit.

i) Observe children playing in your neighbourhood park. Do you notice any difference in how boys and girls form groups or the type of games they play? Prepare a note on it.

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3.4.3 Macro Level Socialization: Global Community, Electronic Media, Social Networking

Macro level comprises larger units. Here we look at entire nation, global forces and international units.

Global Community

We live in an age of inventions and innovations. Today every aspect of our life is

undergoing a sea change. Technology has taken tremendous strides transforming our lives. Our globe has shrunk, geographical boundaries are disappearing, distances have been reduced, and communication network has brought the people all over the world together eliminating barriers of caste, race or region. We are reconfiguring the communication dynamics and moving towards a global community or a global village.

These days it is easily noticeable how increased access to information is giving rise to increase in cultural opportunities to the "masses" of humanity. Historically, cultural opportunities were the privilege of the reasonably rich or affluent. Now the vista is wide open with many such opportunities from around the world easily available, leading to greater scope for socialization.

Let us examine how mass media and social networking are accelerating the socialization process.

MASS MEDIA.

Can you imagine how your life would be without the printed words, television, radio, mobile phones? Impossible, isn't it?

Such is the power of Mass media.

So far, you have read how society influences young minds through parents, schools, and peers, yet another agent of socialization which is worth considering is Mass Media. Today, the dynamics of rapid changes can be felt in every society and every institution. This, in turn, necessitates the forging of new social forms and new methods of communication like the mass media. The mass media is a vehicle for spreading information on a massive scale and reaching to a vast audience or a large number of people. The term *media* is derived from the Latin word for "middle," suggesting that media connect people. The media is instrumental in defining what we think, how we look upon our social place and issues in the society.

The mass media comprises both the print media such as books, newspapers, magazines, etc., and also non-print media such as radio, television, and movies The goal is to reach out to the mass or large number of people without establishing any personal contact between senders and receivers. It permeates into all aspects of society, be it political, linguistic, cultural or spiritual. Media is all pervasive; its functioning is very subtle and has both positive and negative influences.

In this millennium age there is onslaught of media. Our environment is supersaturated with various types of media giving rise to many debates and discussions- Does the content of television programs and video games make children more aggressive? Does such exposure make them less sensitive? Is television turning children into introverts? Is intense media exposure detrimental to academic success? In trying to answer such questions, we have to be careful not to go over board by exaggerating its advantages or to criticize it for its harmful nature. In order to understand this, let us take the case of television.

In the last few decades, children have been dramatically socialized by one source in particular i.e. television. Now, virtually, every home has at least one television set. The influence of television as a potent agent of socialization can be understood if you read the following case :

Shin Chan was banned in India on 4th December 2008. Parents are worried about the unruly comments and acts shown on the Shin Chan cartoon show. The cartoon series shows a naughty five-year-old boy making the life of his parents miserable. ''The series was having a negative impact on

kids. The character does things which are prohibitory in India," said a mother of two. Anxieties of Indian parents are not unfounded.

(Source: Sengupta, Rajit.(2008, December 04). India bans telecasting of Shin Chan.Merinews.Retrieved from http://myshinchan.hpage.co.in/shin-chan-was-banned-in-india_41280135.html).

It only highlights the adverse effects of excessive Television watching especially violence. Although most research in television has been on the influence of television on anti-social behaviour, especially violence, yet we cannot deny that children obtain considerable political and social information from television; a judicious use of the same can yield fruitful dividends. Books too can influence the readers through its contents. But, sometimes gender stereotypes also creep in through the protagonists and illustrations in stories and anecdotes.

In this context it is worthwhile to discuss the role of Electronic Media.

Electronic Media

In a developing country like ours, television and computers have become very important agencies of socialization. We have already seen the influence of television on the young minds. Internet and cell phones are increasingly establishing commonness and connectedness among people all over the world. Now children are getting exposed to a world beyond their homes and community to the global community and are being socialized in such a way that they fit into a global world.

Social sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. open up a new world altogether and expose the child's mind into different cultures that he or she did not know and are introduced to a whole new world. The progress from Orkut to Facebook, twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, Tumblr, have been so rapid that by the time one learns the nitty-gritty of one such site, he/she is bombarded with another. The accesses to such sites are not only through mass media on our computers but are easily available on our iPads and cell phones.

Social Networking and Virtual Communities

In Australia a campaign named one million was launched in the website in 2009. The aim was to build a movement of strong, inspirational women and girls acting on climate change by leading low carbon lives. Through the website Natalle Issacs, one Million founder appealed to women to join the campaign, "I BELIEVE A MILLION WOMEN WILL TELL A MILLION MORE AND LEAD A MILLION COMMUNITIES." Its impact was astounding. One Million Women has grown to become Australia's largest women's environmental organization committed to cut more than 100,000 tons of carbon pollution. Such is the impact of social networking and virtual communities.

Social Networking

Social networking implies the use of internet based social media programmes in order to make connections with one's family members, friends, classmates, clients or customers. It provides a platform for people to share their common interests, likes and dislikes and build social contacts. This is facilitated by Multimedia and the new electronic communication technologies, such as emails and the Internet.

Virtual communities are online communities where people across the world can be brought together through social media. They are small aggregations of people with common ideas, interests, etc. sharing cyberspace. No doubt the cell phones are

packed with Apps, Selfies and Emojis. However, research shows that new communication technologies not only reinforce our social connections but deepen them as well. Communication satellites, cable networks, computer systems, and their usages and ideas have become indispensable to modern living.

Some may argue that online communities tend to replace traditional communities but that is not so. In fact they only supplement them. In this age of information explosion, being socialized into the competent use of new communication technologies becomes essential. Individual networks of relationships can be built with and without face-to-face interactions.

Locating childhood friends, forming groups, getting updates minute by minute are all possible, thanks to the digital media network.

New communication technologies allow for new and different forms of sociability. Youngsters find it more appealing compared to traditional ones because one can be choosy depending on own likes and dislikes. In virtual communities, gender, race and other ascribed statuses are irrelevant. However, on the flip side, one must be warned against getting drowned in the massive sweep. The Central Bureau of Investigation raised a warning against the pervasive presence of pornography on internet which led to degeneration of social values among the youth. This also can be correlated to the rampant prevalence of crimes related to sexual assault in our country (The Times of India, Oct 11, 2015). Despite the negative influences, global units like Mass media, Electronic media and Virtual communities continue to contribute to the socialization process.

Check Your Progress 3

Notes: (a) Write your answers in the space given below.

(b) Compare your answers with the one given at the end of the unit.

i) Fill in the blanks

a) Mass Media includes —————— and ——————

b) Virtal communities are also known as —————— communities

c) Examples of virtual communities are ——————, —————— and ——————

ii) Explain how new communication technologies allow for new and different forms of sociability.

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3.5   LET US SUM UP

In this Unit, we have discussed the basic concept of socialization as a lifelong process and how it is carried out by various agents. We introduced you to the various agencies of socialization and clarified how each agency contributes to the moulding of an individual's personality. The agents of socialization have been classified into Micro, Meso and Macro level and the process at each level spelled out. At the Micro level, family, peer group and neighbourhood are the major agencies of socialization. Family

plays a pivotal role in socialization. We have also discussed at length about adolescents' socialization in the family. At the Meso level, the role of other agencies like school, religion, social class becomes significant. School is a miniature society where children of different families, religions, castes and economic status come together; partake in collective activities and learn to adjust to the society. Here, a teacher as an agent of socialization assumes importance. We have also discussed gender socialization at each level. The role of religion is very powerful; so is the interaction with the social class. At the Macro level, the impact of mass media and electronic media have been explained by citing examples. Social networking not only facilitates socialization, but also enhances the ability to understand others in a better way.

3.6 UNIT -END EXERCISES

1. What is socialization? What are the phases of socialization?

2. Why is family said to be the most important agent of socialization?

3. Discuss the role of school as an agency of socialization?

4. Mention the various types of Mass Media.

3.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. i) Man is a social animal. He cannot live in isolation. S/he constantly interacts with others through various agencies. This way socialization contributes in moulding one's personality. Lack of socialization would hinder growth and development. Hence socialization is vital.

2. i) Write your own observation.

3. i) a. Print Media, Non print Media

    b. Online communities

    c. Facebook, Twitter

   ii) New communication technologies allow for new and different forms of sociability. Unlike the traditional methods of communication, individual networks of relationships can be built with and without face-to-face interactions. Moreover the advancement in communication technology has brought people closer. Now locating childhood friends, forming groups, getting updates minute by minute all are possible due to the digital media network. Again individuals can exert their choice. Also in virtual communities, gender, race and other ascribed statuses are irrelevant.

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