
UNIT 8 NATURE OF SOCIALISATION

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8.0 OBJECTIVES

On going through this unit you should be able to:

- describe the process of socialisation of human infants to become members of their society;
- explain distinctive features of socialisation that takes place in different social settings; and
- analyse types of socialisation.

8.1 INTRODUCTION

In this unit we shall discuss various aspects of socialisation. It begins with the process and concept of socialisation and discusses its aims and functions. Among the important aspects of this unit is a discussion on types of socialisation. This includes conscious and unconscious socialisation and socialisation into role playing, anticipatory socialisation and re-socialisation. This unit, thereby, provides an in-depth view of the nature of socialisation.

8.2 WHAT IS SOCIALISATION?

All societies are concerned with the question: "How are the raw products or the human infants born into the society to be transformed into workable human objects or trained to

become members of their societies?" The human infant is born as a biological organism with only animal needs and impulses. It learns to control bowel movements and regulate hunger as it grows up because the child has an inborn capacity to learn and to communicate.

Gradually it also learns the group-defined ways of acting and feeling. The process through which it learns to internalise the values and norms into its self or the mode of learning to live in society is called the process of socialisation. to internalise is to absorb something within the mind so deeply that it becomes part of the person's behaviour, e.g., good manners. Therefore, socialisation is basically the learning of social values and roles by its members. In other words., most human behaviour is learned. It is not spontaneous.

Social scientists have referred to this capacity of the child to learn and to internalise as the plasticity of human nature. This capacity to learn is realised through socialisation; and human infants develop into adequate members of human societies through the training received in the family. This development is largely a process of learning. Therefore, we would like to stress the point that what are known as seemingly inborn attitudes are determined and moulded through the process of socialisation or learning of social norms, values, attitudes beliefs and behaviour patterns.

8.2.1 Shared Meanings and Values

The socialisation of the young means that they learn to appreciate the shared meanings and values of the culture at large or take them and that as guides to direct behaviour patterns in their own life. As the young child grows, he or she learns to utilise role-learning so as to internalise what to expect from other people and how to produce for them what is expected of children. A child learns to recognise and to respond to the shared meanings and expectations from others only through the process of socialisation.

The process of socialisation begins at birth. It is a continuous process because social learning never ends. However, childhood is the most important stage in the process of socialisation during which a child internalises or learns most of the values, beliefs, norms, attitudes and behaviour patterns of its family. The parents can be viewed as the socialising agents and the child as the socialise. "Parents are usually the most potent socialising force working on the individual in the early stages of childhood. Both consciously and unconsciously they push the child in certain directions disposing him to learn in a particular way." (White, G. 1977 : 1) It is viewed by sociologists as a continuous and dynamic process that continues throughout life and demands re-socialisation (discussed in 8-6) at different stages of one's life.

Thus, from the point of view of society, socialisation trains a child to become a member of a society by transmitting its norms, values and beliefs. It also transforms the biological organism into a self, with a sense of identity, capable of disciplining and ordering behaviour endowed with ideals, values and ambitions. However, socialisation regulates behaviour, it is also an indispensable condition for individuality and self-awareness (Broom and Selznick, 1955 : 43).

Activity 1

Do you think a boy and a girl are socialised in the same way in your family/kin group? If not, then why? Write an essay on "Gender Difference and Socialisation in My Family" in about 500 words. Share your ideas and essay with other students and Academic Counsellor at your study centre.

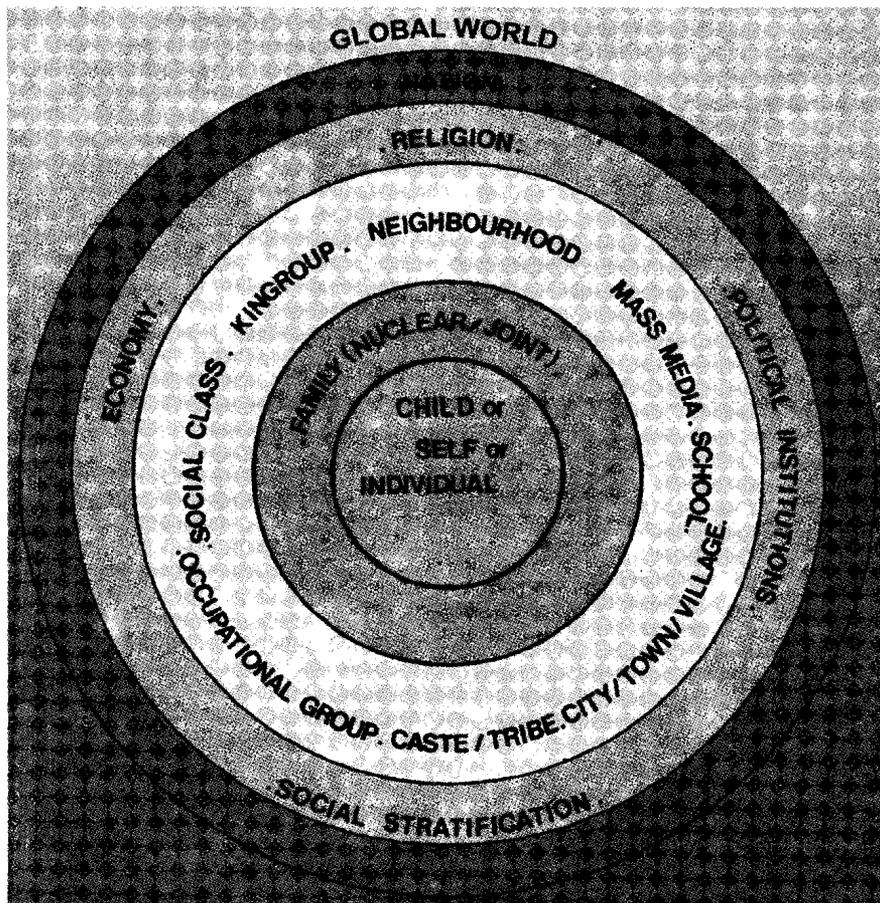
8.2.2 Education and Socialisation

In some societies, especially in tribal societies, the education and socialisation of the young takes place without extensive formal educational institutions. However, education as a process of learning is universal and takes place everywhere whether one lives in a city, village, and jungle or in a desert. The universality of learning however, does not mean that all learning is socialisation just as all education is not socialisation.

We may also mention that all learning is not socialisation since some of what one learns may not be relevant or necessary for participation in given social roles. One could give the example of, learning to smoke cigarette, cigar, etc. which may be irrelevant to that norms of participation in the given social roles among certain social groups. However, the process by

which individuals acquire these values and norms (these are also referred to as culture) is in many ways similar in all societies. They may differ from society to society and according to certain factors within specific societies.

A child, in the first instance, is a member of a family. But he or she is also a member of a larger kin-group (Biradri, Khandan etc.) consisting of brothers, sisters and other relatives of the parents. The family into which he or she is born may be a nuclear family or an extended family (for the difference see Unit 5 of this course). It is also a member of a larger society. Membership of these groups and institutions imposes certain behavioural norms and values on each member. Thus, we are members of various groups simultaneously. For instance, we are a member of family, a biradri, a khandan, or a kunba, or a society, of a school or college all at the same time. Corresponding to these memberships there are roles that are performed, e.g., that of a son, daughter, grand child 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.



Nature of Socialisation

Check Your Progress 1

- Note: a) Use the space below for your answer.
 b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

1) Explain in three lines what is meant by socialisation.

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8.3 SOCIALISATION: NORMS AND VALUES

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 in a city or one belongs to a tribe and whether one is a boy or girl. These social groups can be viewed as socialising agencies. Their role confirms that the variation in norms and values takes place according to some of these affiliations mentioned above. For example, emphasis on cleanliness may vary according to social class. Also the language that one speaks depends on the region one belongs to. A child is not born knowing a particular language but learns it after birth. Again, some people do not eat meat altogether or abstain only from beef or pork according to the religious groups they belong to. Thus the same human infant is capable of growing into different kinds of adults. The adult personality formed in one society will be different from that of an adult in another society: he or she may be unfit for participation in many others. For example, a person who does not eat meat, smoke or drink alcohol may look odd in a family where all these are permitted. Is socialisation a one way process in which the child merely receives from the parents passively without being actively involved in it? There are different views on it. However, in this unit, our position is that it is a two-way process involving mutuality of interaction. True, the young child is not as active as the adult member, it is never a passive receiver.

What we have emphasised so far is that the aim of the socialisation process is to help the child learn to conform to the societal norms, values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviour patterns. Here when we refer to societal expectation, it means that there are various levels of expectation. When the individual is born, the first societal experience is through the family but as the child grows up in the modern contemporary societies, his/her experiences expand. It becomes a member of a number of agencies. The school is the second agency of which children become members. Later on they will also become members of the religious groups to which their parents belong. They will also be members of the social classes to which their families belong. They will also become members of the occupational groups. The specific aim of socialisation is to help the child to internalise these norms and become an active member of the society.

A child is integrated into the society in the manner discussed above. Therefore, socialisation is the process of social control to strengthen group life and also to foster the development of the individual. It teaches or trains the individual to conform to the expectations of the social group or groups. Thus, conformity to the group norms and behaviour is basic to the process of socialisation through which society exerts social control on the individual members.

8.3.1 Transmission of Knowledge

According to Emile Durkheim, the categories of thought in the mind of individuals develop during the course of socialisation. Socialisation also transmits knowledge from one generation to the next. Social solidarity requires conformity to norms, rules and values as prescribed by the society. When groups assemble and reinforce the feelings of solidarity e.g., wedding, or religious festivals, mourning etc., these occasions help express the solidarity of the family and the kin group. On the other hand, the Republic Day and the Independence Day are occasions to express the solidarity of the nation. The social customs, rituals and social ceremonies and occasions which bring members of a group together are called socialisation practices. Through these practices, knowledge about norms values and behaviour pattern is transmitted among members of human social groups.

The individual, through socialisation, helps maintain the social order. Thus socialisation brings about social control by enabling the individual to know what to think and what not to think, what to do and what not to do. Here, apart from the sense of group solidarity, the individual has the fear of disapproval, punishment etc. which the society metes out for various acts of deviance from the normal course of conduct.

8.3.2 Conformity

While socialisation produces a degree of conformity to social norms behaviour in every society, yet some individuals may still not conform. In other words, socialisation may not be able to command complete conformity from all members of the society. Many factors may encourage conflict. There may be conflicts between the aims and functions of the socialising agents and of the socialisee. We have already mentioned that an individual is socialised by many agencies – the family, the school, playmates, peer group, occupational group, and in the modern society, also by the written word (i.e. books, magazines) and by the mass media (television, radio, cinema). If they emphasise different values, the individual's conformity to the values of a group or groups will be reduced. For example, students may be encouraged to

be exposed to mass-media. However, if mass-media teaches fundamentalism and extreme conservatism, the conformity of students to liberal values is likely to be reduced.

The cases of non-conformity are referred to as those of deviance from the norms of the group (see unit 30 on Social Control and unit 31 on Social Deviance). The values of the children from the poor families will be at variance with those of the school. These children are referred to as deviants and in extreme cases as juvenile delinquents.

8.4 CONSCIOUS AND UNCONSCIOUS SOCIALISATION

Much of the socialisation of the child within a family and the school is conscious. In other words, parents consciously inculcate in the child certain behaviour patterns and values that they consider desirable. They achieve this by constantly telling the child what is good from what is bad, what is right form of behaviour from what is wrong. They also reward the child if it conforms to these expectations, and punish in the opposite case. Therefore, the process of socialisation is reinforced through a system of rewards and punishments. For example, the emphasis on cleanliness, obedience, promptness, manliness and womanliness begins early in life in most families. This is conscious socialisation since the socialising agents (parents) are conscious about the aims of socialisation process. Yet a major part of the process of socialisation is unconscious and consists of learning through observation.

However, socialisation process within the family is conscious, as well as unconscious. The same is true of the school where the aims of the school are explicit and are sought to be inculcated in the classroom through text books. For instance, the explicit aim of the school is to teach and to help students to succeed in their examinations. At the same time, the children interact or mix with other children outside the classroom. They make friends and form small groups called peer groups. These are important sources of influence on children. They also become members of peer groups within their neighbourhood where they have a small number of friends with whom they play almost regularly. Sometimes children learn the norms and behaviour patterns of the members of their groups and these may be contradictory to those of their family or the school. For example, if children begin to smoke because their friends smoke whereas their families are opposed to it, there is going to be conflict. Or, children may begin to take serious interest in schoolwork although no member of their families is intellectually inclined. On the other hand, interest in studies may be common to the members of the family as well as to their friends. This process is the unconscious process of the socialisation where children who learn and the children from whom they learn are not conscious of or do not anticipate the consequences of their association and interaction.

8.4.1 Explicit and Implicit Directions

We have distinguished between conscious and unconscious socialisation processes and have given examples of the explicit and implicit injunctions against certain behaviour patterns. The aims of the process within the families are not deliberate, and explicit. Families do not say that they are training the children to become honest or hard working, or boys to become fearless, or girls to become passive. On the other hand, the cognitive aims of the schools are well-known. The students are to read well. Pass their examination and so on. Therefore there is a difference between the two processes that take place within the family, on the one hand, and the school and other formal agencies, on the other. We may therefore draw a distinction between the two processes and state that the aims of socialisation process within the secondary groups such as schools are deliberate, more explicit and conscious compared with that of the family. But both the processes take place simultaneously.

8.4.2 Behaviour Patterns

The learning of different behaviour patterns and values from one's friends or peers is the unconscious process of socialisation. In fact, it is difficult to draw a distinction between a socialising agent and a socialisee i.e., the peer group and the socialisee. The staying away from the school could be one such example. A child may become friendly with those children who play truant very often and remain absent from classes, and may learn to play truant after becoming a member of that group. On the other hand, another child who initially did not place high value on punctuality within the school, may learn to do so because he happens to

become friendly with children who are very punctual. These are examples of unconscious socialisation.

In contemporary societies, much of the unconscious learning takes place through the mass media such as the cinema, the television, the comics, and novels (i.e., the print medium). The emulation of the hero in the Indian cinema by the college going youth is a good example of unconscious socialisation.

Check Your Progress 2

- Note:** a) Use the space below for your answer
 b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.
- 1) Fill in the blanks given in the following sentences:
- i) The aim of the socialisation process is to help the child to learn to conform to the societal
 and
 - ii) Socialisation may not be able to command complete from all members of the society.
 - iii) Socialisation process within the family is as well as
 - iv) The aim of socialisation process within the secondary groups such as schools is more and as compared with that of the family.

8.5 ROLE AND SOCIALISATION

A human infant is born in a social group. And soon after birth it becomes a member of the social group and occupies the social position of a son or a daughter or of a grandson or a grand-daughter. Thus the role refers to the social position one occupies by virtue of one's position in a particular social group, and it entails rights as well as obligations.



VARIOUS ROLES OF A SOCIALISEE

An individual has to play different roles, the role of a son or a daughter, the role of a grandson or a grand-daughter in the due course of his/her life. In other words, a person occupies different social positions which are interrelated. The term role-set is used to refer to the complex of roles occupied or performed by a person at one time (see Unit 25). The implication of this is that a child learns to behave in the manner that is expected of it by different socialising agents. For instance, a child's behaviour with a parent has to be different from that with the sister, or friends or neighbours or classmates. These roles need not follow one after the other but may be performed simultaneously, other roles may be added or deleted. The list however is not exhaustive.

Similarly the behaviour with one's grandmother has to be different from that with one's own mother. The child learns to perceive and internalise these subtleties as part of growing up. As one learns a role well, one is able to interact with others, playing other roles and to engage in role-interaction over time. This is what is called role and role socialisation.

Thus, role is the behaviour pattern based on norms. However, it is invested with specific meaning e.g., the role of a boy/girl in a particular society is part of the culture of that society.

How does one learn a role? Initially, a child merely observes the roles of parents and other members of the family and re-enacts them. Gradually, one learns to distinguish oneself from others and one's role from the roles of others. One learns through observation, constant reinforcement and reminders along with rewards for conformity and punishment for non-conformity.

Activity 2

Do you observe any changes in parent child relationship within your family or friends circle which did not exist earlier? Discuss with your friends and family members and write a one page report on "The Impact of Social Change on the Process of Socialisation Including Parent Child Interaction". Compare your report with those of other students at your study center. Also, discuss the topic with your Academic Counsellor.

8.5.1 Primary and Secondary Socialisation

The needs of individuals are divided by psychologists into primary and secondary needs. The primary needs are those which are in-born such as thirst and hunger. The secondary needs are, for example, the need for learning or to work. Secondary needs are those which emerge, in the way, to satisfy primary needs. Similarly, institutions in the society are also divided into primary and secondary institutions. The family is the first social group in which the child is born, it is also the first group which satisfies and meets the primary needs of the human-infant. It is called a primary group whereas a school is a secondary group because it meets the derived needs of the child. Parents are the primary or the chief socialising agents for the child whereas the school teachers are the secondary socialising agents. We may also distinguish between primary and secondary roles and between primary socialisation and secondary socialisation. Norms and values within the family may be called the process of primary socialisation whereas the learning of the behavioural patterns, norms and values of the school may be called secondary socialisation.

8.5.2 Child and Adult Socialisation

As we have mentioned earlier, the process of socialisation or learning of social roles continues throughout life. As the individual becomes a member of different social groups and institutions, it begins to learn new norms and values. For example, when one joins school one has to learn the discipline of the school and the role of a student. Later on, as an adult, one has to learn to become a parent and to assume family responsibilities. When one takes up an occupation and becomes a member of an occupational group one has to learn the responsibilities and roles that are implied in the membership of that particular group. For example, the role of an executive will be very different from that of a small tea-stall owner, or of a labourer. People have to be socialised in taking on these roles and values. That is why, sociologists believe that the process of socialisation continues throughout life and does not end at adolescence.

8.6 RE-SOCIALISATION

Re-socialisation is a process of altering one's behaviour pattern and in the process imbibing new social values and behaviour patterns. An individual is constantly learning new roles. As a member of different social groups or institutions throughout one's life. For instance, a child becomes a member of its family first, and learns to play the role of a son or daughter, or that of a grandson or a grand-daughter if it is living in an extended family. If the father's sister is living in the family the child also learns to play the role of a nephew or niece. Later when beginning to play in the neighbourhood, one makes friends and follows the norms of the group. For example, if a child disrupts the game too often or fights or cheats, others will boycott that child till he/she stops causing disruption.

Later, a child goes to school and learns to play the role of a student. Still later s/he takes up a job and joins an organisation or sets up one's own enterprise or business. Whatever work is taken up, one has to follow the work ethics of that occupational group and abide by the norms. Thus, one is constantly learning new roles.

However, in some instances an individual has not only to learn a new role but simultaneously has to unlearn part of the norms and behaviour patterns associated with an earlier role in order to be effective in the new role. A very good example of unlearning the old role and learning a new one is the role of an Indian girl before and after marriage. While there may be differences in emphasis and also in the norms and behaviour patterns expected of girls in different parts of India, we may safely generalise behaviour pattern of a daughter before and after marriage.

8.6.1 Marital Re-socialisation

When a daughter is engaged to be married the process of new socialisation or re-socialisation starts. She may be given instructions on how to behave in the presence of her in-laws. Among Punjabi Hindu families a daughter does not cover her head in front of her elders before her marriage nor does she touch their feet. After her engagement she may be trained to cover her head and also to touch the feet of elders, since she will have to do this soon after the marriage. Though, we may mention that this may not be practised any more among the upper and middle class families, especially among the educated in the metropolitan cities.

Her re-socialisation begins after marriage. She has already been given countless instructions to give up the carefree behaviour of her maiden days in the home of her in-laws, and to pay deference to nearly every elder in her husband's family and how not to seem to be independent. A newly married girl goes through the process of unlearning her earlier behaviour gradually. In the initial stage she may only hide it or suppress it, and one may see her behaving normally when she visits her parental home. As for example, she may laugh freely in her parent's home – something that may be considered inappropriate in the home of her in-laws.

Another example of re-socialisation is that of a widowed woman. This is particularly marked in some parts of India where a widow's behaviour has to change very drastically after the death of her husband. The external marks of a married woman are removed from her body, that is, she has to wear a particular dress or a saree of a particular colour, all her jewellery has to be removed, the kumkum and vermilion marks on her forehead and parting between her hair have also to be removed ceremoniously through certain rituals which are performed in these families. Her head is shaven. In addition she has to live in a different part of the house. The kind of tasks she is to perform in the family also change suddenly. She is considered inauspicious and cannot participate in marriage rituals and other religious ceremonies.

8.6.2 Attitudinal Change

Re-socialisation refers to the process through which during their life span, individuals change or are forced to change their attitudes, values, behaviour and self-conceptions as they assume new roles and undergo new experiences. Though the long-range change may be profound, single steps along the way may or may not be gradual. For instance, the new role may be a continuation of the old role or the past roles or may require discontinuation. Again, it may need only minor changes or radical changes involving a wholly new set of behaviour patterns. In addition, it may affect either a part or the whole of the personality or the self of an

individual. It may also involve breaking away from the past values and norms or may just be a projection of the past values and norms.

Thus changes in adulthood that are gradual and partial are called continuous socialisation. Re-socialisation denotes more basic, rapid and radical changes. It involves giving up one way of life for another. It is not only different from the former but is at times incompatible with it. The usual examples given are brain-washing or indoctrination or rehabilitation of criminals. The aim is to fundamentally change the person and to effect a break with the past. Another example would be of persons who have lived all their life in Bombay, Kolkata or Delhi and are asked to live among tribals in a remote village in Madhya Pradesh or vice-versa. If you belong to a city, you may also be familiar with the villagers trying to adjust themselves to city life, by changing their notions of what is proper and what is improper and by changing their behaviour. Similarly if you belong to a village, you may have seen the problems faced by the person from the city, for example, school teacher or medical doctors or nurses or mid-wives and how they adapt to the village life.

8.6.3 Extensive and Intensive Socialisation

Certain occupational and life roles demand extensive and intensive socialisation. This socialisation approximates to re-socialisation, for example, the role of a Christian priest or a nun or a Granthi in a Gurdwara or the role for combat only. Cadets are systematically removed from the society of which they are a part and then they are given assignments involving new personal and social identities; and a sense of identity with the nation and solidarity among themselves is instilled into them through the training given in the institutions. Similarly we have given the example of an Indian girl after marriage or that of a widow.

Re-socialisation of a mature individual is difficult to accomplish. Generally speaking it requires that the conditions of childhood socialisation be reproduced in intense and extreme form, specially when this is done through a very deliberate process as in the case of re-socialisation of a cadet or a criminal or of a widow. Re-socialisation may be forced upon the individual (as in brain-washing or indoctrination) or voluntary (as in the case of an anthropologist living in a tribe).

The process of re-socialisation, if it contradicts with the initial socialisation and if the individual is unable to cope with the demand made by the new role, may create conflict in the life of an individual. This is especially so where differing value systems are concerned. For eg. A person coming from a conservative family background in India finds it extremely difficult to adjust to a cultural environment where social taboos, sexual taboos, etc. of his or her own culture do not match at all. In such an environment a person suffers a culture shock and can end up being a mental patient.

8.7 ANTICIPATORY SOCIALISATION

Anticipatory socialisation refers to the process whereby an individual or a group emulates the values, norms and behaviour patterns of a group other than to which one belongs, in anticipation of being accepted as its member. Thus, the concept of anticipatory socialisation is related to the reference group theory. According to this theory, the behaviour, values and norms of an individual are determined with reference to a particular group or groups. As the membership of these groups varies, the individuals who are in the process of moving from one group to another will emulate the behaviour of the members of the group or with reference to the group they wish to belong. An excellent example would be that of individuals who have acquired sudden wealth and who try to conform to the values, and behaviour of the upper strata or upper castes of the society. They will change their dress, behaviour, dietary habits and even their language and customs. For example, those who did not give dowry may start doing so and those women who did not observe parda may be expected to do so.

Anticipatory socialisation is undergone by individuals as well as groups and it happens or takes place in situations of social mobility and social change. Lower castes in the villages, after becoming well-off, try to emulate the upper castes. For example, if the dominant caste in a village are the Brahmins, the lower caste or castes who attain wealth will become vegetarian and teetotalers; they will change their caste names, wear the sacred thread to claim the status of the twice-born, stop sending their women to work for wages and adopt the

rites of Brahmins such as head shaving (Mundan). They may also impose rigid behavioural norms on their widows.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: a) Use the space below for your answer

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

1) Answer the following questions in 'yes' or 'no' by marking one box:

- | | | | |
|------|--|-----|----|
| i) | Does a child play only one role in the family. | Yes | No |
| ii) | Are thirst and hunger the secondary needs of individuals? | Yes | No |
| iii) | Does a person constantly learn new roles throughout one's life? | Yes | No |
| iv) | Is it easy to accomplish the re-socialisation of mature individuals? | Yes | No |

8.8 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have studied various aspects of socialisation. We began with providing an understanding of socialisation and its various aspects. It includes the norms and values that socialisation inculcates. We also studied in this unit the process by which knowledge is transmitted from one generation to another. The aspects of implicit and explicit socialisation, re-socialisation, and anticipatory socialisation are also discussed here.

8.9 FURTHER READINGS

- 1) Broom, L and Selznick, P. 1973. Sociology. Harper and Row Publishers: New York.
- 2) White, G. 1977. Socialisation. Longman : London.

8.10 KEY WORDS

- Conformity** : To absorb certain social rules and regulations in behaviour, e.g., being appropriately dressed in social gatherings.
- Internalisation** : To absorb something within the mind so deeply that it becomes part of one's behaviour, e.g., to internalize good manners.
- Re-socialisation** : To alter one's behaviour pattern and in the process imbibing new social values and behaviour pattern.
- Socialisee** : A person who is being socialised into the ways of society.

8.11 MODEL ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Socialisation is a learning process whereby one imbibes social values and behaviour patterns.

Check Your Progress 2

- i) norms, values, belief, attitudes, behaviour pattern
- ii) conformity
- iii) conscious, unconscious
- iv) deliberate explicit conscious

Check Your Progress 3

- i) No
- ii) No
- iii) Yes
- iv) No