

Socialisation: The Meaning, Features, Types, Stages and Importance

Every society is faced with the necessity of making a responsible member out of each child born into it. The child must learn the expectations of the society so that his behaviour can be relied upon. He must acquire the group norms. The society must socialise each member so that his behaviour will be meaningful in terms of the group norms. In the process of socialisation the individual learns the reciprocal responses of the society.

Socialisation is a processes with the help of which a living organism is changed into a social being. It is a process through which the younger generation learns the adult role which it has to play subsequently. It is a continuous process in the life of an individual and it continues from generation to generation.

Meaning of Socialisation:

The newborn is merely an organism. Socialisation makes him responsive to the society. He is socially active. He becomes a 'Purush' and the culture that his group inculcates in him, humanises him, and makes him 'Manusha'. The process indeed, is endless. The cultural pattern of his group, in the process gets incorporated in the personality of a child. It prepares him to fit in the group and to perform the social roles. It sets the infant on the line of social order and enables an adult to fit into the new group. It enables the man to adjust himself to the new social order.

Socialisation stands for the development of the human brain, body, attitude, behaviour and so forth. Socialisation is known as the process of inducting the individual into the social world. The term socialisation refers to the process of interaction through which the growing individual learns

the habits, attitudes, values and beliefs of the social group into which he has been born.

From the point of view of society, socialisation is the way through which society transmits its culture from generation to generation and maintains itself. From the point of view of the individual, socialisation is the process by which the individual learns social behaviour, develops his 'self.

The process operates at two levels, one within the infant which is called the internalisation of objects around and the other from the outside.

Socialisation may be viewed as the "internalisation of social norms. Social rules become internal to the individual, in the sense that they are self-imposed rather than imposed by means of external regulation and are thus part of individual's own personality.

The individual therefore feels an urge to conform. Secondly, it may be viewed as essential element of social interaction. In this case, individuals become socialised as they act in accordance with the expectations of others. The underlying process of socialisation is bound up with social interaction.

Socialisation is a comprehensive process. According to Horton and Hunt, Socialisation is the process whereby one internalises the norms of his groups, so that a distinct 'self emerges, unique to this individual.

Through the process of socialisation, the individual becomes a social person and attains his personality. Green defined socialisation "as the process by which the child acquires a cultural content, along with selfhood and personality".

According to Lundberg, socialisation consists of the “complex processes of interaction through which the individual learns the habits, skills, beliefs and standard of judgement that are necessary for his effective participation in social groups and communities”.

Peter Worsley explains socialisation “as the process of “transmission of culture, the process whereby men learn the rules and practices of social groups”.

H.M. Johnson defines socialisation as “learning that enables the learner to perform social roles”. He further says that it is a “process by which individuals acquire the already existing culture of groups they come into”.

The heart of socialisation”, to quote Kingsley Davis.” is the emergence and gradual development of the self or ego. It is in terms of the self that personality takes shape and the mind comes to function”. It is the process by which the newborn individual, as he grows up, acquires the values of the group and is moulded into a social being.

Socialisation takes place at different stages such as primary, secondary and adult. The primary stage involves the socialisation of the young child in the family. The secondary stage involves the school and the third stage is adult socialisation.

Socialisation is, thus, a process of cultural learning whereby a new person acquires necessary skills and education to play a regular part in a social system. The process is essentially the same in all societies, though institutional arrangements vary. The process continues throughout life as each new situation arises. Socialisation is the process of fitting individuals

into particular forms of group life, transforming human organism into social being and transmitting established cultural traditions.

Features of Socialisation:

Socialisation not only helps in the maintenance and preservation of social values and norms but it is the process through which values and norms are transmitted from one generation to another generation.

Features of socialisation may be discussed as under:

1. Inculcates basic discipline:

Socialisation inculcates basic discipline. A person learns to control his impulses. He may show a disciplined behaviour to gain social approval.

2. Helps to control human behaviour:

It helps to control human behaviour. An individual from birth to death undergoes training and his, behaviour is controlled by numerous ways. In order to maintain the social order, there are definite procedures or mechanism in society. These procedures become part of the man's/life and man gets adjusted to the society. Through socialisation, society intends to control the behaviour of its-members unconsciously.

3. Socialisation is rapid if there is more humanity among the-agencies of socialisation:

Socialisation takes place rapidly if the agencies of socialisation are more unanimous in their ideas and skills. When there is conflict between the ideas, examples and skills transmitted in home and those transmitted by school or peer, socialisation of the individual tends to be slower and ineffective.

4. Socialisation takes place formally and informally:

Formal socialisation takes through direct instruction and education in schools and colleges. Family is, however, the primary and the most influential source of education. Children learn their language, customs, norms and values in the family.

5. Socialisation is continuous process:

Socialisation is a life-long process. It does not cease when a child becomes an adult. As socialisation does not cease when a child becomes an adult, internalisation of culture continues from generation to generation. Society perpetuates itself through the internalisation of culture. Its members transmit culture to the next generation and society continues to exist.

Types of Socialisation:

Although socialisation occurs during childhood and adolescence, it also continues in middle and adult age. Orville F. Brim (Jr) described socialisation as a life-long process. He maintains that socialisation of adults differ from childhood socialisation. In this context it can be said that there are various types of socialisation.

1. Primary Socialisation:

Primary socialisation refers to socialisation of the infant in the primary or earliest years of his life. It is a process by which the infant learns language and cognitive skills, internalises norms and values. The infant learns the ways of a given grouping and is moulded into an effective social participant of that group.

The norms of society become part of the personality of the individual. The child does not have a sense of wrong and right. By direct and indirect observation and experience, he gradually learns the norms relating to wrong and right things. The primary socialisation takes place in the family.

2. Secondary Socialisation:

The process can be seen at work outside the immediate family, in the 'peer group'. The growing child learns very important lessons in social conduct from his peers. He also learns lessons in the school. Hence, socialisation continues beyond and outside the family environment. Secondary socialisation generally refers to the social training received by the child in institutional or formal settings and continues throughout the rest of his life.

3. Adult Socialisation:

In the adult socialisation, actors enter roles (for example, becoming an employee, a husband or wife) for which primary and secondary socialisation may not have prepared them fully. Adult socialisation teaches people to take on new duties. The aim of adult socialisation is to bring change in the views of the individual. Adult socialisation is more likely to change overt behaviour, whereas child socialisation moulds basic values.

4. Anticipatory Socialisation:

Anticipatory socialisation refers to a process by which men learn the culture of a group with the anticipation of joining that group. As a person learns the proper beliefs, values and norms of a status or group to which he aspires, he is learning how to act in his new role.

5. Re-socialisation:

Re-Socialisation refers to the process of discarding former behaviour patterns and accepting new ones as part of a transition in one's life. Such re-socialisation takes place mostly when a social role is radically changed. It involves abandonment of one way of life for another which is not only different from the former but incompatible with it. For example, when a criminal is rehabilitated, he has to change his role radically.

Theories of Socialisation: Development of Self and Personality:

Personality takes shape with the emergence and development of the 'self'. The emergence of self takes place in the process of socialisation whenever the individual takes group values.

The self, the core of personality, develops out of the child's interaction with others. A person's 'self' is what he consciously and unconsciously conceives himself to be. It is the sum total of his perceptions of himself and especially, his attitudes towards himself. The self may be defined as one's awareness of and ideas and attitudes about his own personal and social identity. But the child has no self. The self arises in the interplay of social experience, as a result of social influences to which the child, as he grows, becomes subject.

In the beginning of the life of the child there is no self. He is not conscious of himself or others. Soon the infant feels out the limits of the body, learning where its body ends and other things begin. The child begins to recognise people and tell them apart. At about the age of two it begins to use 'I' which is a clear sign of definite self-consciousness that he or she is becoming aware of itself as a distinct human being.

Primary groups play crucial role in the formation of the self of the newborn and in the formation of the personality of the newborn as well. It can be stated here that the development of self is rooted in social behaviour and not in biological or hereditary factors.

In the past century sociologists and psychologists proposed a number of theories to explain the concept of self.

There are two main approaches to explain the concept of self – Sociological approach and: Psychological approach.

Charles Horton Cooley:

Charles Horton Cooley believed, personality arises out of people's interactions with the world. Cooley used the phrase "Looking Glass Self" to emphasise that the self is the product of our social interactions with other people.

To quote Cooley, "As we see our face, figure and dress in the glass and are interested in them because they are ours and pleased or otherwise with according as they do or do not answer to what we should like them to be; so in imagination we perceive in another's mind some thought of our appearance, manners, aims, deeds, character, friends and so on and variously affected by it".

The looking glass self is composed of three elements:

1. How we think others see in us (I believe people are reacting to my new hairstyle)
2. What we think they react to what they see.
3. How we respond to the perceived reaction of others.

For Cooley, the primary groups to which we belong are the most significant. These groups are the first one with whom a child comes into contact such as the family. A child is born and brought up initially in a family. The relationships are also the most intimate and enduring.

According to Cooley, primary groups play crucial role in the formation of self and personality of an individual. Contacts with the members of

secondary groups such as the work group also contribute to the development of self. For Cooley, however, their influence is of lesser significance than that of the primary groups.

The individual develops the idea of self through contact with the members of the family. He does this by becoming conscious of their attitudes towards him. In other words, the child gets his conception of his self and latter of the kind of person he is, by means of what he imagines others take him to be Cooley, therefore, called the child's idea of himself the looking glass self.

The child conceives of himself as better or worse in varying degrees, depending upon the attitudes of others towards him. Thus, the child's view of himself may be affected by the kind of name given by his family or friends. A child called 'angel' by his mother gets a notion of himself which differs from that of a child called 'rascal'.

The 'looking glass self assures the child which aspects of the assumed role will praise or blame, which ones are acceptable to others and which ones unacceptable. People normally have their own attitudes towards social roles and adopt the same. The child first tries out these on others and in turn adopts towards his self.

The self thus arises when the person becomes an 'object' to himself. He is now capable of taking the same view of himself that he infers others do. The moral order which governs the human society, in large measure, depends upon the looking glass self.

This concept of self is developed through a gradual and complicated process which continues throughout life. The concept is an image that

one builds only with the help of others. A very ordinary child whose efforts are appreciated and rewarded will develop a feeling of acceptance and self-confidence, while a truly brilliant child whose efforts are appreciated and rewarded will develop a feeling of acceptance and self – confidence, while a truly brilliant child whose efforts are frequently defined as failures will usually become obsessed with feelings of competence and its abilities can be paralyzed. Thus, a person's self image need bear no relation to the objective facts.

A critical but subtle aspect of Cooley's looking glass is that the self results from an individual's imagination of how others view him or her. As a result, we can develop self identities based on incorrect perceptions of how others see us. It is because people do not always judge the reactions of others accurately, of course and therein arise complications.

Stages of Socialisation:

G.H. Mead:

The American psychologist George Herbert Mead (1934) went further in analysing how the self develops. According to Mead, the self represents the sum total of people's conscious perception of their identity as distinct from others, just as it did for Cooley. However, Mead's theory of self was shaped by his overall view of socialisation as a lifelong process.

Like Cooley, he believed the self is a social product arising from relations with other people. At first, however, as babies and young children, we are unable to interpret the meaning of people's behaviour. When children learn to attach meanings to their behaviour, they have stepped outside themselves. Once children can think about themselves the same way they might think about someone else, they begin to gain a sense of self.

The process of forming the self, according to Mead, occurs in three distinct stages. The first is imitation. In this stage children copy the behaviour of adults without understanding it. A little boy might 'help' his parents vacuum the floor by pushing a toy vacuum cleaner or even a stick around the room.

During the play stage, children understand behaviours as actual roles- doctor, firefighter, and race-car driver and so on and begin to take on those roles in their play. In doll play little children frequently talk to the doll in both loving and scolding tones as if they were parents then answer for the doll the way a child answers his or her parents.

This shifting from one role to another builds children's ability to give the same meanings to their thoughts; and actions that other members of society give them- another important step in the building of a self.

According to Mead, the self is composed of two parts, the 'I' and the 'me'. The 'I' is the person's response to other people and to society at large; the 'me' is a self-concept that consists of how significant others – that is, relatives and friends-see the person. The 'I' thinks about and reacts to the 'me' as well as to other people.

For instance, 'I' react to criticism by considering it carefully, sometimes changing and sometimes not, depending on whether I think the criticism is valid. I know that people consider 'me' a fair person who's always willing to listen. As they trade off role in their play, children gradually develop a 'me'. Each time they see themselves from someone else's viewpoint, they practise responding to that impression.

During Mead's third stage, the game stage, the child must learn what is expected not just by one other person but by a whole group. On a baseball team, for example, each player follows a set of rules and ideas that are common to the team and to baseball.

These attitudes of 'other' a faceless person "out there", children judge their behaviour by standards thought to be held by the "other out there".

Following the rules of a game of baseball prepares children to follow the rules of the game of society as expressed in laws and norms. By this stage, children have gained a social identity.

Jean Piaget:

A view quite different from Freud's theory of personality has been proposed by Jean Piaget. Piaget's theory deals with cognitive development, or the process of learning how to think. According to Piaget, each stage of cognitive development involves new skills that define the limits of what can be learned. Children pass through these stages in a definite sequence, though not necessarily with the same stage or thoroughness.

The first stage, from birth to about age 2, is the "sensorimotor stage".

During this period children develop the ability to hold an image in their minds permanently. Before they reach this stage. They might assume that an object ceases to exist when they don't see it. Any baby-sitter who has listened to small children screaming themselves to sleep after seeing their parents leave, and six months later seen them happily wave good-bye, can testify to this developmental stage.

The second stage, from about age 2 to age 7 is called the preoperational stage. During this period children learn to tell the difference between

symbols and their meanings. At the beginning of this stage, children might be upset if someone stepped on a sand castle that represents their own home. By the end of the stage, children understand the difference between symbols and the object they represent.

From about age 7 to age 11, children learn to mentally perform certain tasks that they formerly did by hand. Piaget calls this the “concrete operations stage”. For example, if children in this stage are shown a row of six sticks and are asked to get the same number from the nearby stack, they can choose six sticks without having to match each stick in the row to one in the pile. Younger children, who haven’t learned the concrete operation of counting, actually line up sticks from the pile next to the ones in the row in order to choose the correct number.

The last stage, from about age 12 to age 15, is the “stage of formal operations. Adolescents in this stage can consider abstract mathematical, logical and moral problems and reason about the future. Subsequent mental development builds on and elaborates the abilities and skills gained during this stage.

Sigmund Freud:

Sigmund Freud’s theory of personality development is somewhat opposed to Mead’s, since it is based on the belief that the individual is always in conflict with society. According to Freud, biological drives (especially sexual ones) are opposed to cultural norms, and socialization is the process of taming these drives.

The Three-part self:

Freud's theory is based on a three-part self; the id, the ego, and the superego. The id is the source of pleasure-seeking energy. When energy is discharged, tension is reduced and feelings of pleasure are produced, the id motivates us to have sex, eat and excrete, among other bodily functions.

The ego is the overseer of the personality, a sort of traffic light between the personality and the outside world. The ego is guided mainly by the reality principle. It will wait for the right object before discharging the id's tension. When the id registers, for example, the ego will block attempts to eat spare types or poisonous berries, postponing gratification until food is available.

The superego is an idealized parent: It performs a moral, judgemental function. The superego demands perfect behaviour according to the parents' standards, and later according to the standards of society at large.

All three of these parts are active in children's personalities. Children must obey the reality principle, waiting for the right time and place to give into the id. They must also obey the moral demands of parents and of their own developing super egos. The ego is held accountable for actions, and it is rewarded or punished by the superego with feelings of pride or guilt.

Stages of Sexual Development:

According to Freud, personality is formed in four stages. Each of the stages is linked to a specific area of the body an erogenous zone. During each stage, the desire for gratification comes into conflict with the limits set by the parents and latter by the superego.

The first erogenous zone is the mouth. All the infant's activities are focussed on getting satisfaction through the mouth not merely food, but the pleasure of sucking itself. This is termed the oral phase.

In the second stage, the oral phase, the anus becomes the primary erogenous zone. This, phase is marked by children's struggles for independence as parents try to toilet-train them. During this period, themes of keeping or letting go of one's stools become salient, as does the more important issue of who is in control of the world.

The third stage is known as the phallic phase. In this stage the child's main source of pleasure is the penis/ clitoris. At this point, Freud believed, boys and girls begin to develop in different directions.

After a period of latency, in which neither boys nor girls pay attention to sexual matters, adolescents enter the genital phase. In this stage some aspects of earlier stages are retained, but the primary source of pleasure is genital intercourse with a member of the opposite sex.

Agencies of Socialisation:

Socialisation is a process by which culture is transmitted to the younger generation and men learn the rules and practices of social groups to which they belong. Through it that a society maintains its social system.

Personalities do not come ready-made. The process that transforms a child into a reasonably respectable human being is a long process.

Hence, every society builds an institutional framework within which socialisation of the child takes place. Culture is transmitted through the communication they have with one another and communication thus

comes to be the essence of the process of culture transmission. In a society there exists a number of agencies to socialise the child.

To facilitate socialisation different agencies play important roles. These agencies are however interrelated.

1. Family:

The family plays an outstanding role in the socialisation process. In all societies other agencies besides the family contribute to socialisation such as educational institutions, the peer group etc. But family plays the most important role in the formation of personality. By the time other agencies contribute to this process family has already left an imprint on the personality of the child. The parents use both reward and punishment to imbibe what is socially required from a child.

The family has informal control over its members. Family being a mini society acts as a transmission belt between the individual and society. It trains the younger generation in such a way that it can take the adult roles in proper manner. As family is primary and intimate group, it uses informal methods of social control to check the undesirable behaviour on the part of its members. The process of socialisation remains a process because of the interplay between individual life cycle and family life cycle.

According to Robert. K. Merton, “it is the family which is a major transmission belt for the diffusion of cultural standards to the oncoming generation”. The family serves as “the natural and convenient channel of social continuity.

2. Peer Group:

Peer Group means a group in which the members share some common characteristics such as age or sex etc. It is made up of the contemporaries of the child, his associates in school, in playground and in street. The growing child learns some very important lessons from his peer group. Since members of the peer group are at the same stage of socialisation, they freely and spontaneously interact with each other.

The members of peer groups have other sources of information about the culture and thus the acquisition of culture goes on. They view the world through the same eyes and share the same subjective attitudes. In order to be accepted by his peer group, the child must exhibit the characteristic attitudes, the likes and dislikes.

Conflict arises when standards of the peer group differ from the standards of the child's family. He may consequently attempt to withdraw from the family environment. The peer group surpasses the parental influence as time goes on. This seems to be an inevitable occurrence in rapidly changing societies.

3. Religion:

Religion play a very important role in socialisation. Religion instills the fear of hell in the individual so that he should refrain from bad and undesirable activities. Religion not only makes people religious but socialises them into the secular order.

4. Educational Institutions:

Parents and peer groups are not the only agencies of the socialisation in modern societies. Every civilised society therefore has developed a set of formalised agencies of education (schools, colleges and universities) which have a great bearing on the socialisation process. It is in the educational

institutions that the culture is formally transmitted and acquired in which the science and the art of one generation is passed on to the next.

The educational institutions not only help the growing child in learning language and other subjects but also instill the concept of time, discipline, team work, cooperation and competition. Through the means of reward and punishment the desired behaviour pattern is reinforced whereas undesirable behaviour pattern meets with disapproval, ridicule and punishment.

In this way, the educational institutions come next to the family for the purpose of socialisation of the growing child. Educational institution is a very important socialiser and the means by which individual acquires social norms and values (values of achievement, civic ideals, solidarity and group loyalty etc) beyond those which are available for learning in the family and other groups.

5. Occupation:

In the occupational world the individual finds himself with new shared interests and goals. He makes adjustments with the position he holds and also learns to make adjustment with other workers who may occupy equal or higher or lower position.

While working, the individual enters into relations of cooperation, involving specialisation of tasks and at the same time learns the nature of class divisions. Work, for him, is a source of income but at the same time it gives identity and status within society as a whole.

Wilbert Moore has divided occupational socialisation into four phases:

- (a) Career choice,
- (b) anticipatory socialisation,
- (c) conditioning and commitment,
- (d) continues commitment.

(a) Career Choice:

The first phase is career choice, which involves selection of academic or vocational training appropriate for the desired job.

(b) Anticipatory Socialisation:

The next phase is anticipatory socialisation, which may last only a few months or extend for years. Some children inherit their occupations. These young people experience anticipatory socialisation throughout childhood and adolescence as they observe their parents at work. Certain individuals decide on occupational goals at relatively early ages. The entire adolescent period for them may focus on training for that future.

(c) Conditioning and Commitment:

The third phase of occupational socialisation takes place while one actually performs the work-related Role. Conditioning consists of reluctantly adjusting to the more unpleasant aspects of one's job. Most people find that the novelty of new daily schedule quickly wears off and realise that the parts of the work experience are rather tedious. Moore uses the term commitment to refer to the enthusiastic acceptance of pleasurable duties that come as the recruit identifies the positive task of an occupation.

(d) Continues Commitment:

According to Moore, if a job proves to be satisfactory, the person will enter a fourth stage of socialisation. At this stage the job becomes an indispensable) art of the person's self identity. Violation of proper conduct becomes unthinkable. A person may choose to join professional associations, unions or other groups which represent his or her occupation in the larger society.

6. Political Parties:

Political parties attempt to seize political power and maintain it. They try to win the support of the members of the society on the basis of a socio-economic policy and programme. In the process they disseminate political values and norms and socialise the citizen. The political parties socialise the citizen for stability and change of political system.

7. Mass Media:

The mass media of communication, particularly television, play an important role in the process of socialisation. The mass media of communication transmit informations and messages which influence the personality of an individual to a great extent.

In addition to this, communication media has an important effect in encouraging individuals to support the existing norms and values or oppose or change them. They are the instrument of social power. They influence us with their messages. The words are always written by someone and these people too – authors and editors and advertisers – join the teachers, the peers and the parents in the socialisation process.

To conclude, environment stimuli often determine the growth of human personality. A proper environment may greatly determine whether the social or the self-centered forces will become supreme. Individual's social

environment facilitates socialisation. If his mental and physical capacities are not good, he may not be able to make proper use of environment. However, the family plays perhaps the important part in the process of socialisation.

The child learns much from the family. After family his playmates and school wield influence on his socialisation. After his education is over, he enters into a profession. Marriage initiates a person into social responsibility, which is one of aims of socialisation. In short the socialisation is a process which begins at birth and continues unceasingly until the death of individual.

Importance of Socialisation:

The process of socialisation is important from the point of view of society as well as from the point of view of individual. Every society is faced with the necessity of making a responsible member out of each child born into it. The child must learn the expectations of the society so that his behaviour can be relied upon.

He must acquire the group norms in order to take the behaviour of others into account. Socialisation means transmission of culture, the process by which men learn the rules and practices of social groups to which belongs. It is through it that a society maintain its social system, transmits its culture from generation to generation.

From the point of view of the individual, socialisation is the process by which the individual learns social behaviour, develops his self. Socialisation plays a unique role in personality development of the individual.

It is the process by which the new born individual, as he grows up, acquires the values of the group and is moulded into a social being. Without this no individual could become a person, for if the values, sentiments and ideas of culture are not joined to the capacities and needs of the human organism there could be no human mentality, no human personality.

The child has no self. The self emerges through the process of socialisation. The self, the core of personality, develops out of the child's interaction with others.

In the socialisation process the individual learns the culture as well as skills, ranging from language to manual dexterity which will enable him to become a participating member of human society.

Socialisation inculcates basic disciplines, ranging from toilet habits to method of science. In his early years, individual is also socialised with regard to sexual behaviour.

Society is also concerned with imparting the basic goals, aspirations and values to which the child is expected to direct his behaviour for the rest of his life. He learns-the levels to which he is expected to aspire.

Socialisation teaches skills. Only by acquiring needed skills individual fit into a society. In simple societies, traditional practices are handed down from generation to generation and are usually learned by imitation and practice in the course of everyday life. Socialisation is indeed an intricate process in a complex society characterised by increasing specialisation and division of work. In these societies, inculcating the abstract skills of literacy through formal education is a central task of socialisation.

Another element in socialisation is the acquisition of the appropriate social roles that the individual is expected to play. He knows role expectations, that is what behaviour and values are a part of the role he will perform. He must desire to practise such behaviour and pursue such ends.

Role performance is very important in the process of socialisation. As males, females, husbands, wives, sons, daughters, parents, children, student's teachers and so on, accepted social roles must be learned if the individual is to play a functional and predictable part in social interaction.

In this way man becomes a person through the social influences which he shares with others and through his own ability to respond and weave his responses into a unified body of habits, attitudes and traits. But man is not the product of socialisation alone. He is also, in part, a product of heredity. He generally possesses, the inherited potential that can make him a person under conditions of maturation and conditioning.