

CUET · SOCIOLOGY · CLASS XI · CODE 326

Culture and Socialisation

CUET unit: Introducing Sociology — Culture and Socialisation

By UniDrill · NCERT-grounded study material

WWW.UNIDRILL.IN

UniDrill

Snapshot

- Defines culture sociologically as a learned, shared way of life (not "refined taste"), distinguishing it from everyday use.
- Lays out the three dimensions of culture — cognitive, normative and material — and the idea of culture lag.
- Introduces ethnocentrism vs cosmopolitanism, evolutionary vs revolutionary cultural change, and sub-cultures.
- Explains socialisation (primary, secondary, life-long) and its principal agencies — family, peer group, school, mass media and others.
- Frequently tested for definitions (Tylor, Malinowski), dimensions, agencies and key terms (ethnocentrism, culture lag, sub-culture).

Detailed Notes

2.1 Core concepts

- Just as one needs a map to navigate unknown territory, one needs **culture to conduct or behave oneself in society**. Culture is the common understanding which is learnt and developed through social interaction with others; a common understanding within a group demarcates it from others and gives it identity. But cultures are **never finished products** — they are always changing and evolving; elements are constantly being added, deleted, expanded, shrunk and rearranged, which makes cultures **dynamic as functioning units** (NCERT §I Introduction, p. 63).
- The capacity of individuals to develop a common understanding with others and to **draw the same meanings from signs and symbols** is what distinguishes humans from other animals — creating meaning is a social virtue learnt in the company of others in families, groups and communities through tools, techniques and signs/symbols, conveyed orally or through books (NCERT §I, pp. 63–64).
- Learning prepares us for carrying out our roles and responsibilities; **what we learn in the family is primary socialisation, while what happens in school and other institutions is secondary socialisation** (NCERT §I, p. 64).
- The autorickshaw box on p. 64 — commuter asks "Indiranagar?", driver answers entirely through eyebrow arches, head jerks and grimaces — illustrates how words

and facial expressions convey meaning in conversation, and how a shared cultural code is implicit in everyday exchange.

- **Diverse settings, different cultures:** humans live in mountains, plains, forests, deserts, river valleys, islands, mainlands, villages, towns and cities. In different environments people adapt different strategies to cope with natural and social conditions, leading to the emergence of diverse ways of life or cultures (NCERT §II, p. 64).
- **2004 tsunami example** (26 December, Tamil Nadu, Kerala coast, Andaman & Nicobar): mainland and island people "integrated into a relatively modern way of life" — fisherfolk and service personnel — were caught unaware and suffered large-scale devastation; in contrast the '**primitive**' tribal communities — **Onges, Jarawas, Great Andamanese, Shompens** — who had no access to modern science and technology, foresaw the calamity based on their experiential knowledge and saved themselves by moving to higher ground. This shows that access to modern science and technology **does not make modern cultures superior** to tribal cultures of the islands; **cultures cannot be ranked but can be judged adequate or inadequate in terms of their ability to cope with the strains imposed by nature** (NCERT §II, p. 64).
- **Defining culture:** in everyday use 'culture' refers to acquiring refined taste in classical music, dance forms or painting; the sociologist looks at culture not as something that distinguishes individuals but as a **way of life in which all members of society participate** (NCERT Defining Culture, p. 66).
- **Edward Tylor (1871)** — culture or civilisation in its wide ethnographic sense "is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (NCERT p. 66).
- **Bronislaw Malinowski (1931)**, founder of the "functional school" of anthropology — "Culture comprises **inherited artifacts, goods, technical process, ideas, habits and values.**" Apart from Tylor's mention of art, all of Tylor's items are non-material; Malinowski expressly includes the material side because he was field-stranded in the Western Pacific during WWI, leading to the tradition of extended field work (NCERT pp. 66–67).
- **Clifford Geertz (1973:5)** — "Man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun. I take culture to be those webs." The search is not for causal explanation but for **interpretive meaning.** **Leslie White** placed comparable emphasis on culture as a means of adding meaning to objective reality (example: people regarding water from a particular source as holy) (NCERT p. 66).
- **Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952), "Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions"** — listed multiple definitions; eight to know: (a) way of thinking, feeling, believing; (b) total way of life of a people; (c) abstraction from behaviour; (d) learned behaviour; (e) storehouse of pooled learning; (f) social legacy the individual acquires from his group; (g) standardised orientations to recurrent problems; (h) mechanism

for normative regulation of behaviour. (a) refers to mental ways, (b) to total life; (d), (e), (f) stress what is shared and passed down generations; (g) and (h) are the first to refer to culture as a means of directing behaviour (NCERT p. 67).

- **Three dimensions of culture** (NCERT p. 68): (i) **Cognitive** — how we learn to process what we hear or see so as to give it meaning (identifying a cell-phone ring, recognising the cartoon of a politician). (ii) **Normative** — rules of conduct (not opening other people's letters, performing rituals at death). (iii) **Material** — any activity made possible by means of materials, including tools and machines (internet 'chatting', using rice-flour paste to design **kolam** on floors).
- **Cognitive aspects** are harder to recognise than material/normative; cognition refers to understanding — how we make sense of the information coming from our environment. In literate societies, ideas are transcribed in books, libraries and archives; in non-literate societies, legend and lore are committed to memory and transmitted orally by specialist practitioners trained to remember and narrate during ritual or festive occasions. Walter Ong's **Orality and Literacy** (1971) notes that only **78 of approximately 3,000 existing languages possess a literature** — written material has specific characteristics including repetition of words to aid memory; oral audiences are more receptive and involved than readers from unfamiliar cultures. Even today students of Indian classical music are discouraged from writing down what they learn (NCERT pp. 68–69).
- **Normative aspects** consist of folkways, mores, customs, conventions and laws — values or rules that guide social behaviour in different contexts. Social norms are followed because we are used to them through socialisation and are accompanied by **sanctions** that promote conformity. **Pierre Bourdieu** reminded us that to understand another culture's norms we must remember there are implicit understandings — e.g., when one wants to show gratitude, one should **not offer a return-gift too quickly**, because that looks like an attempt to get rid of a debt, not a friendly gesture (NCERT p. 69).
- **Laws** are formal sanctions defined by the State as rules or principles citizens must follow; they are explicit, applicable to whole society, with penalties and punishment for violation. **Norms** are implicit and can vary by family and status — children not allowed outdoors after sundown is a norm; stealing a gold necklace violates the universal law of private property and attracts jail. **Dominant sections impose dominant norms** which may be discriminating — e.g., norms that did not allow **dalits from drinking water from the same vessel or source**, or **women from moving freely in the public sphere** (NCERT pp. 69–70).
- **Material aspect**: tools, technologies, machines, buildings, modes of transportation, instruments of production and communication. Urban areas: mobile phones, music systems, cars/buses, ATMs, refrigerators, computers. Rural areas: transistor radios, electric motor pumps for irrigation. The material dimension is crucial to increase production and enhance quality of life (NCERT p. 70).

- **Culture lag** (NCERT p. 70): for integrated functioning of culture the material and non-material dimensions must work together — but when the material/technological dimensions change rapidly, the non-material aspects (values, norms) can **lag behind** and be unable to match the advances of technology.
- **Culture and Identity**: identities are not inherited but fashioned by individual and group through relationships with others. For the individual the social roles s/he plays impart identity; **every person in modern society plays multiple simultaneous roles** (parent/child, son/daughter, grandchild, student) — each role carries particular responsibilities and powers. Roles must be recognised and acknowledged, often through a particular language/code: students invent slang to refer to teachers and class performances; **women create their own language at the pond (rural) or across washing lines on rooftops (urban)** to secure private space beyond the control of men (NCERT p. 70).
- **Sub-cultures**: groups within a larger culture (elite youth, working-class youth) marked by **style, taste and association** — identifiable by speech, dress codes, music preference, manner of interacting with members. Sub-cultural groups can function as **cohesive units** which impart identity — e.g., a youth neighbourhood club for sports creates a positive self-image and inspires better performance; the group differentiates itself and creates its own identity (NCERT pp. 70–71).
- **Ethnocentrism**: arises only when cultures come into contact — application of one's own cultural values in evaluating the behaviour and beliefs of people from other cultures, treating one's own as the standard/norm and superior. **Macaulay's Minute on Education (1835)** to the East India Company — "We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern, a class of persons **Indian in blood and colour but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and intellect**" (Mukherji 1948/1979:87) — exemplifies colonial ethnocentrism (NCERT p. 71).
- **Cosmopolitanism** is the opposite of ethnocentrism — values other cultures for their difference, does not evaluate by one's own standard, celebrates and accommodates different cultural propensities, promotes cultural exchange and borrowings to enrich one's own culture. **The English language** has emerged as a leading vehicle of international communication through its constant inclusion of foreign words; **Hindi film music** owes its popularity to borrowings from western pop and Indian folk/semi-classical forms like **bhangra and *ghazal***. Cultural influences are always incorporated in a distinctive way and combined with elements of indigenous culture — English does not become a separate language, nor does Hindi film music lose its character (NCERT pp. 71–72).
- **Hinglish box** (p. 72) — words like **airdash, chaddis, chai, crore, dacoit, desi, dicky, gora, jungli, lakh, lampat, optical, prepone, stepney, would-be**, archaic **pukka**, and newly-coined **time-pass** and **'Bangalored'** (for those whose jobs are outsourced to India) — illustrates cosmopolitan cultural borrowing.

- **Cultural Change** (NCERT pp. 72–73): the way societies change their patterns of culture. Impetus can be **internal** (new methods of farming/agriculture transform food consumption and quality of life) or **external** (conquest, colonisation, contact with other cultures). Loss of forest resources has devastated tribal communities in North East India and middle India. **Revolutionary change** is rapid radical transformation — **the French Revolution of 1789 transformed French society by destroying the estate system of ranking, abolishing the monarchy, and inculcating liberty, equality and fraternity**. Whether modern media has brought evolutionary or revolutionary change is an open question.
- **Socialisation** (NCERT §III, p. 73): at birth the human infant knows nothing about social behaviour. Socialisation is the process whereby the helpless infant gradually becomes a self-aware, knowledgeable person skilled in the ways of the culture into which s/he is born. **Without socialisation an individual would not behave like a human being** — the famous '**Wolf-children of Midnapore**': two small girls found in a wolf den in Bengal in 1920, who walked on all fours, preferred raw meat, howled like wolves and lacked any form of speech (NCERT p. 73).
- The birth of a child also changes the lives of parents (new learning experiences), of older people becoming grandparents (forging another set of relationships), and of any earlier child (becoming a sibling). **Socialisation is a life-long process** even though primary socialisation in early years is most critical; secondary socialisation extends through life (NCERT p. 74).
- Socialisation is not '**cultural programming**' — even a newborn asserts will (crying when hungry); family schedules are completely reorganised with the birth of a child. A child belongs simultaneously to family, **biradari/khaandaan**/clan, sub-caste, tribe, religious and linguistic group; multiple roles (son, daughter, grandchild, student) are performed simultaneously, and norms/values differ across castes, regions, classes, religions, village vs city — even the language one speaks (whether closer to a spoken dialect or a standardised written form) depends on family and socio-economic profile (NCERT p. 74).
- **Agencies of socialisation** (NCERT p. 75): family, school, peer group, neighbourhood, occupational group, social class/caste, region, religion.
- **Family**: in nuclear families parents may be key socialising agents; in extended families grandparents, uncles or cousins may be more significant. In most traditional societies the family largely determines an individual's social position for life. Even when social position is not strictly inherited, the **region and social class** of the family sharply affect socialisation patterns. Few children take over their parents' outlook unquestioningly — especially in a fast-changing contemporary world; the very diversity of socialising agencies leads to differences between children, adolescents and parents (NCERT pp. 75–76).
- **Peer groups**: friendship groups of children of similar age. In some cultures (small traditional societies) peer groups are formalised as **age-grades**. The word 'peer' means 'equal', and relations between young children tend to be reasonably

egalitarian. There is a greater amount of **give and take** in peer relations compared to the dependence of family situations — children discover a different kind of interaction in which rules can be tested and explored. Peer relationships remain important throughout life (NCERT p. 76).

- **Schools:** formal organisation with a definite syllabus; but also socialise through a '**hidden curriculum**' — e.g., in many Indian schools (and many other countries) **boys are not expected to sweep the classroom**; some schools counter this by making boys/girls do tasks not normally expected of them (NCERT p. 76).
- **Mass media:** print and electronic; can democratise access to information, reaching villages not connected by road. In 19th-century India 'conduct-books' instructed women on being better housekeepers and attentive wives. A **British study** showed time spent by children watching television is equivalent to **almost a hundred school days a year**, and adults are not far behind; the link between on-screen violence and aggressive behaviour is still debated. The reach of media is sizeable — Indian TV serials and films are watched in **Nigeria, Afghanistan, and by Tibetan émigrés**; the televised **Mahabharat was aired after dubbing in Tashkent**, but even without dubbing was watched in London by English-only-speaking children. The **Shaktimaan serial** led children to dive down buildings in fatal accidents — "learning by imitation is a method frequently followed by people and children are no different" (NCERT pp. 76–77).
- **Other socialising agencies:** work is important in all cultures, but only in industrial societies do large numbers of people '**go out to work**' — go each day to places of work quite separate from the home. In traditional communities many people tilled land close to where they lived or had workshops in their dwellings (NCERT pp. 77–78).
- **Socialisation and Individual Freedom:** socialisation in normal circumstances can never completely reduce people to conformity — many factors encourage conflict, between socialising agencies, between school and home, between home and peer groups. Because the cultural settings we are born and come to maturity in so influence our behaviour, it might appear we are robbed of individuality or free will; but **socialisation is also at the origin of our very individuality and freedom** — interaction with others both conditions personality and develops a sense of self-identity and the capacity for independent thought and action. The "How Gendered is Socialisation?" box (Kumar 1986) and **The Bell** by Gita Krishnakutty (girl ringing the temple bell against grown-ups' wishes) illustrate these conflicts (NCERT pp. 78–79).

2.2 Definitions to memorise

Term	Definition	Page
Culture (Tylor 1871)	"That complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society."	66

Term	Definition	Page
Culture (Malinowski 1931)	"Inherited artifacts, goods, technical process, ideas, habits and values."	66
Culture (Geertz 1973)	Webs of significance man himself has spun; search for interpretive meaning, not causal explanation.	66
Cognitive dimension	How we process what we hear or see so as to give it meaning.	68
Normative dimension	Rules of conduct — folkways, mores, customs, conventions and laws.	68–69
Material dimension	Activity made possible by means of materials — tools, machines, buildings, transportation.	68, 70
Folkways/mores/customs/conventions	Components of normative culture, ranging from informal to formal.	69
Norm	Implicit rule of conduct; can vary by status.	69
Law	Formal sanction defined by government; explicit, applicable to whole society, violation attracts penalty.	69
Sanction	Reward/punishment that promotes conformity to norms.	69
Culture lag	Situation where non-material dimensions are unable to match the rapid advances of technology/material dimensions.	70
Sub-culture	Group within a larger culture that borrows and often distorts/exaggerates/inverts the symbols, values and beliefs of the larger culture to distinguish itself.	70–71, 80
Ethnocentrism	Applying one's own cultural values in evaluating others; treating one's own as the standard/norm.	71
Cosmopolitanism	Outlook valuing other cultures for their difference and promoting cultural exchange.	71–72
Cultural Evolutionism	Theory that culture, like natural species, evolves through variation and natural selection.	80
Great Tradition	Cultural traits/traditions written and accepted by educated/learned elites.	80
Little Tradition	Cultural traits/traditions which are oral and operate at the village level.	80
Estates System	Feudal European system of ranking — nobility, clergy and 'third estate'; peasants/labourers had no vote.	80
Self Image	Image of a person as reflected in the eyes of others.	80
Social Roles	Rights and responsibilities associated with a person's social position or status.	80
Socialisation		80

Term	Definition	Page
	The process by which we learn to become members of society.	
Primary socialisation	What we learn in the family.	64
Secondary socialisation	What happens in school and other institutions.	64
Hidden curriculum	Implicit norms (e.g., gendered chores in school) that schools transmit alongside the formal syllabus.	76
Age-grades	Formalised peer-group categories in some small traditional societies.	76

2.3 Diagrams / processes to remember

- **Kroeber-Kluckhohn 8-row table "Culture is..."** listing definitions (a)–(h) — way of thinking/feeling/believing; total way of life; abstraction from behaviour; learned behaviour; storehouse of pooled learning; social legacy from group; standardised orientations to recurrent problems; mechanism for normative regulation (NCERT p. 67).
- **Photograph sequence "Discuss how natural settings affect culture"** — desert camel caravan, snow-bound mountain village with stupas, Kerala snake-boat — illustrating diverse settings → diverse cultures (NCERT p. 65).
- **'Hinglish' word-box** (airdash, chaddis, chai, desi, gora, jungli, lampat, stepney, would-be, "Bangalored", "time-pass") as a cosmopolitan-borrowing example (NCERT p. 72).
- **Three-fold scheme:** Material ↔ Non-material (Cognitive + Normative); failure of these to keep pace = culture lag (NCERT p. 70).
- **Agencies of socialisation sequence:** family → peer group → school → mass media → work → social class/caste/region/religion (NCERT pp. 75–78).
- **Tsunami contrast** (2004): "modern" mainland/island people devastated vs Onges/Jarawas/Great Andamanese/Shompens saved by experiential knowledge (p. 64) — central anti-ethnocentrism illustration.
- **Wolf-children of Midnapore (1920)** — used to demonstrate socialisation's necessity (p. 73).
- **The Bell (Gita Krishnakutty)** — temple-bell incident illustrates conflict between socialising agencies and gendered socialisation (p. 79).

2.4 Common confusions / NTA trap points

- **"Refined taste in classical music/painting"** is the **everyday** meaning of culture, NOT the sociological meaning — students often pick it as the right answer in a definition question.

- **Taylor's definition is non-material-heavy; Malinowski's** was the first to expressly include material things ("inherited artifacts, goods, technical process") — a frequent assertion-reason trap.
- **Norms (implicit) vs laws (explicit, State-backed)** — students confuse the two; sanctions for law are formal/penal, for norms social.
- **Culture lag** = non-material lags behind material (technology runs ahead, values lag) — NTA flips this direction as a distractor.
- **Ethnocentrism is the opposite of cosmopolitanism** — not of "modernity" or "traditionalism".
- **Primary socialisation = family; secondary = school/other institutions** — but socialisation is **life-long** (so "ends at adulthood" is a trap).
- **The Wolf-children of Midnapore (1920)** shows what happens **without** socialisation — not an example of socialisation working.
- **Sub-culture is not the same as "counter-culture"**; NCERT glossary stresses it borrows from and often **distorts/exaggerates/inverts** the larger culture's symbols.
- **Macaulay's 1835 Minute** is cited as exemplifying **colonial ethnocentrism**, not cosmopolitanism — even though it promoted English language, its intent was the imposition of British cultural superiority.
- **"Webs of significance"** is Clifford **Geertz**, not Edward **Taylor** — NTA can swap these names.
- **Bourdieu's gift-return example**: returning a gift **too quickly** looks like getting rid of a debt — students often misremember the direction.
- **Tsunami example** illustrates that **cultures cannot be ranked** as superior/inferior — be careful with framings that imply tribal cultures are "primitive" in a pejorative sense.
- **Hidden curriculum** is a **school** phenomenon, NOT a peer-group one.

2.5 Thinkers & theories

Name	Concept	Key Idea	NCERT page
Edward B. Tylor (1871)	Classic definition of culture	"That complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom..."; non-material emphasis.	66
Bronislaw Malinowski (1931)	Functional-school definition	"Inherited artifacts, goods, technical process, ideas, habits and values" — first to expressly include material.	66
Clifford Geertz (1973)	Interpretive anthropology	Culture as "webs of significance" man himself has spun; seeks meaning, not causal explanation.	66

Name	Concept	Key Idea	NCERT page
Leslie White	Culture as meaning	Culture is means of adding meaning to objective reality (e.g., water from a source seen as holy).	66
Alfred Kroeber & Clyde Kluckhohn (1952)	Comprehensive survey	Eight-row table of definitions — ways of thinking, total way of life, learned behaviour, normative regulation.	67
Pierre Bourdieu	Implicit understandings	Norms involve unspoken meanings — return-gift too quickly = paying off a debt, not friendship.	69
Walter Ong (Orality and Literacy , 1971)	Orality vs literacy	Only 78 of ~3,000 languages possess literature; oral material has repetition; audiences more receptive.	68
Thomas Babington Macaulay (1835)	Colonial ethnocentrism	Minute on Education — produce "Indian in blood and colour but English in tastes, opinions, morals, intellect".	71
Krishna Kumar (1986)	Gendered socialisation	"Growing up Male" — boys' free use of the street vs girls' fear of assault and clustered movement.	78
Gita Krishnakutty	The Bell	Story of girl who rings the temple bell — illustrates conflict between socialising agencies + ascribed status.	79
French Revolution (1789)	Revolutionary cultural change	Destroyed estate system, abolished monarchy, inculcated liberty, equality, fraternity.	73
Wolf-children of Midnapore (1920)	Necessity of socialisation	Two girls in a wolf den walked on all fours, ate raw meat, howled, lacked speech.	73
Onges/Jarawas/ Great Andamanese/ Shompens	Experiential knowledge	Foresaw the 2004 tsunami and saved themselves — shows cultures cannot be ranked.	64
D.P. Mukherji	Sociology of Indian Culture	Source for the Macaulay quote (Mukherji 1948/1979:87).	71

Practice MCQs

PYQ Alignment

Culture and Socialisation is among the highest-yield chapters of **Introducing Sociology** in CUET 326. Past papers (2023–2025) have repeatedly drawn definitional MCQs (Tylor vs Malinowski; norms vs laws), dimension-mapping items (cognitive/normative/material with examples), and direct-recall questions on ethnocentrism, culture lag, sub-culture and the agencies of socialisation (family, peer group, school, mass media). Expect 5–7 MCQs each cycle, including at least one assertion–reason and one match-the-following.

CUET 2024 — Actual PYQs from this chapter

Q.47 (CUET 2024) Which of the following is a major agent of socialisation?

- A) Family B) School C) Media D) All of the above **Tests:** Agencies of socialisation — family, peer group, school, mass media. **Answer:** Not in extracted key

UniDrill