

11

ACCULTURATION, ASSIMILATION AND INTEGRATION

In the previous lesson we have discussed some of the social processes as expressed in social interaction. Imagine a situation when individual members co-operate with each other compete with one another and engage in conflicting behaviour with one another or with opponents. We can say that co-operation, competition and conflicts are social processes primarily concerned with the nature of social interaction between individuals or groups. However, there are other forms of social processes operating in society at large. These are processes of acculturation, assimilation and integration. Such processes do not describe the nature of individual interaction in given social situation. On the other hand, they throw some light on the outcome of such interactions at the level of the entire society and culture. Thus, in brief we can say that the previous lesson describes the nature of social interaction at the level of individuals or groups; whereas this lesson would deal with the implications of these interactional processes for society at large. Therefore, this lesson will mainly focus on those social processes of social and cultural change.

Many culture traits are common to all societies such as love and hate, pride and prejudices, sex and ceremonies. The cultural differences are reflected in geography, human ingenuity, technology, education, conflict of interest, inherited and tradition backed notions. This lesson explores the concerns and issues relating to different aspects of social processes, a prime concern for the study of social relations with individual living in groups with others.



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OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson, you will be able to:

- explain the concept of Acculturation, Assimilation and Integration as processes of culture change and culture contact;
- explain the nature and factors of these three processes;
- correlate inter-relationships and variations, in these three processes; and
- explain the ways and means to achieve these social processes in different social and cultural groups.

11.1 ACCULTURATION

Acculturation means transmission of cultural elements from one social group to another. Acculturation is a process of culture change, which results due to contact between communities belonging to different cultures. In case of acculturation both the cultures get mutually affected as the culture traits of one culture move into the other culture and vice versa.

Culture contact operates in all societies and groups. It is possible only when people are desirous of accepting the new traits and continue to follow old traits.

Culture is not inborn. After birth an individual learns cultural values, practices, traditions and norms while growing up in the given physical and social environment. On the other hand there is nothing called pure or pristine culture. Cultural insulation in an absolute sense is not possible. No culture can survive in isolation. A culture is a dynamic process characterized by continuity and change.

Culture contact is facilitated by modern means of transport and communication. Such contacts between members of two different cultures help in mutual borrowing of different cultural traits. For example, the areas affected are art and artifacts, dress and food habits, language and literature, practices and rituals in their economic, social and religious life. Such borrowing is visible more in material culture and values, which are more or less common. Mostly in the process of acculturation, borrowing of such cultural traits reflects influence of dominant culture on those which are either numerically smaller or are new comers or immigrants. Acculturation means transmission of cultural elements from one social group to another. Some times it could also be the other way round.

Education is a strong factor in acculturation as it influences the community through the ideas and motivation that are transmitted. Modern means of transport and communication are equally important factors to reflect the process of acculturation.

The cultural borrowing and cultural export cannot be taken for granted. The borrowing depends upon the borrowers' capabilities and capacity to accept and adopt change. Culture cannot be adopted in toto or completely. A wholesale transplantation of culture can not be possible.

Acculturation is a universal and continuous process, which takes place over a period of time. The process of continuity and change as well as unity and extension characterizes culture. In an acculturation situation the conflict between traditional culture and modernity might not present any serious problem.

11.1.1 Characteristics of Acculturation

1. Acculturation could be either a conscious or an unconscious process. People borrowing the culture traits of other groups might be aware of the fact that they are borrowing or they might do it without realizing that these are being borrowed by them.
2. Acculturation takes place when two or more communities belonging to different cultures come together and start adopting each others culture trait. So it is a two way process of culture change. Both the groups involved undergo some change.
3. Acculturation does not take place overnight. It takes a long time before the members borrow the culture traits from other communities. But the time taken for acculturation is definitely shorter than the time taken for assimilation. So in comparison to assimilation, acculturation consumes relatively less time.
4. Acculturation can take place either through direct first hand contact or through indirect contact from a distance such as through radio, television, newspaper,, literature etc.
5. Acculturation is a pre condition of assimilation or integration. Once the situation of culture contact is obtained, it can lead to either assimilation or integration.

INTEXT QUESTIONS 11.1

Fill in the blanks with appropriate terms:

- a) Acculturation is a process of _____.
- b) Acculturation is a _____.
- c) It results due to mutual _____.



Notes



- d) Culture contact is facilitated by _____ and _____.
- e) Acculturation means _____ of cultural elements from one social group to another.
- f) Acculturation is _____ and _____ process.
- g) Acculturation is a pre condition to _____ and _____.

11.2 ASSIMILATION

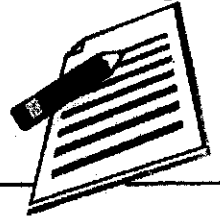
Assimilation again is the result of culture contact. It is a common belief that more the persons interact, the more they are apt to like each other. The more they interact, the more alike they tend to become. There is a general belief that the more we know about others, the better we like them. Assimilation means that a person or group has acquired the values of another group to such an extent that it loses its identity. Assimilation is a process where close contact of persons of dissimilar cultures always results in fusion of cultural traits although borrowing may not be so pronounced in one direction as in the case of the other.

Assimilation is also conceived as a natural and unassisted process and practice. Assimilation is considered akin to the theory of "like mindedness". This idea was partly an outcome of the popular notion that similarities and homogeneity are identical with unity. The idea of assimilation was conceived to be that of feeling, thinking and acting alike.

Another meaning of assimilation is that the immigrant has contributed in the past and may be expected to contribute something of his own temperament, culture and philosophy to the future. This conception has its origin among the immigrants and has been formulated and interpreted by persons who are in close contact with them. This recognition of the diversity in the easements entering into cultural process is not, of course, inconsistent with expectation of an ultimate homogeneity of the product. It has called attention to the fact that the process of assimilation is concerned with differences quite as much as with likeness.

Assimilation is a process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments and attitudes of other persons or groups by sharing their experience and history and are incorporated with them in a common cultural life: In so far as assimilation denotes this sharing of tradition, this intimate participation in common experiences, assimilation is central in the historical process.

The modifications of attitudes in the process of assimilation are not only gradual, but moderate, even if they appear considerably enduring in their accumulation over a long period of time.



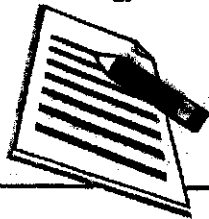
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11.2.1 CHARACTERISTICS OF ASSIMILATION

1. Assimilation takes place without any deliberate and conscious efforts on the part of the groups involved in the process. Hence assimilation is an unconscious process.
2. Usually assimilation takes long time to materialize. When two cultures come in contact with one another it is only after a considerable amount of time that one gets merged with the other. Hence assimilation is a slow process.
3. Assimilation occurs when the cultures involved in the process are unequal. Some sort of ranking exists between them. One is the dominant culture and the other one is the subordinate culture. Usually the dominant culture absorbs the smaller cultures into its own fold leading to assimilation.
4. Assimilation is not a temporary phenomenon. It has lasting effects. The changes taking place in the culture due to assimilation continue for a long time.

INTEXT QUESTIONS 11.2

1. Which of the following statements is not true:
 - a. assimilation is a temporary form of acculturation.
 - b. assimilation is a slow process.
 - c. assimilation is unconscious.
 - d. assimilation is a product of acculturation.
2. Which of the following factors is a hindrance to assimilation.
 - a. inter-marriages
 - b. economic equality with cultural homogeneity.
 - c. negative reciprocity with sharp cultural differences.
 - d. none of these.
3. Assimilation is a process of _____ (Fusion/Fission/Cultural disjunction/Integration)
4. In assimilation
 - a. cultures involved are always equal
 - b. cultures involved are characterized by homogenous social organization



Notes

- c. one culture is dominant and the other culture is either numerically small or marginal.
- d. all of these

11.3 INTEGRATION

Integration is a process of integration into a single unit, out of separate parts. Integration, therefore, brings members to remain together and forces the members to remain in one group. Thus integration brings stability in a group. It acts as a process of organisation. It is opposite to social isolation and a process of alienation and segregation. Group integration refers to group cohesion or group solidarity.

Integration is a group process and is mainly concerned with individuals living in groups or in the presence of other groups. It is, therefore, important to understand the needs and ways of forming groups. This knowledge will help us in understanding the degree and extent of cohesion in these groups.

Groups are formed to satisfy the needs of individual members. A group provides membership and security to its members and thus helps in generating sense of belonging to a particular group. It can be termed as demographic or statistical category. Another kind of group is called social category. This refers to persons who have the same status and perform the same role. A social group is characterised by patterned interaction, shared belief and values. The example of social groups is family, kin groups, village and caste etc.

In order to keep the members together and maintain the solidarity of the group, integration is the binding force. The group stability depends upon integration. It is this process, which compels the members to remain united in the group. Integration is a process to join together the members of a group and keep them in a single unit.

Group integration refers to social relationships between members of groups at different levels of integration. Such social relationships vary in degree and intensity and these may be referred to as highly integrated, loosely integrated or moderately integrated.

The levels of integration in different groups may be classified as family, clan, village, peer and caste, class, religion, region, state and national levels. At all these levels the family may be highly integrated whereas, the socio-cultural level of integration among other different groups would be loosely integrated. It depends on the varied situation and needs of various groups. During natural calamity and foreign aggression the integration at national level is very high reflecting national solidarity and national unity. Similar is the case with regard to region, religion, caste and other levels of socio-cultural integration.



Notes

11.3.1 Components of Integration

Integration is formed by the following components

- i. Sharing of common characteristics facilitates group solidarity resulting from division of labour, reciprocal relationship and interdependence.
- ii. Acceptance and observation of various norms set by the group is another unifying factor.
- iii. Ethnocentrism or a preference for one's own culture among the members of a group is functional in promoting social control within the group.
- iv. Discipline among the members unites the group.

The principal factors affecting integration of a group are interdependent activity, consensus and morale. Group cohesion and integration are strengthened by mutual satisfaction and not alone by social interaction.

11.3.2 Factors Affecting Integration

- i. Size of a group: It is easier to integrate small size of groups for many kinds of activity than a large group.
- ii. The primary group has greater potential to integrate.

The relationship between physical mobility and group integration may be viewed as an aspect of the problem of relationship between homogeneity and integration. Mobility introduces a stranger into the group and the problem is how to assimilate him without jeopardizing the group solidarity. here, it is stated that the larger the proportion of new comer, the greater is the resistance of the established group to their integration.

11.3.3 Characteristics of Integration

1. Integration is a complex social process in comparison to acculturation and assimilation.
2. It is complex because it requires a lot of structural adjustments on the part of the groups involved.
3. The communities of groups undergo changes in terms of some of the institution where as they retain the traditional features and practices in case of other institutions.



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4. Integration refers to the process of uniting or linking cultural parts with the whole or mainstream culture.

The constituent cultures retain their cultural identity and at the same time they share some aspects of the common culture with which they are integrated.

INTEXT QUESTIONS 11.3

1. Mark the following as true or false:
 - (i) group integration refers to social relationships between members of groups at different levels of integration. (True/False)
 - (ii) acceptance and observation of various norms set by the group is not a factor. (True/False)
 - (iii) the size of a group affects its integration. (True/False)
 - (iv) the secondary group has greater potentiality as compared to primary group, to integrate. (True/False)
 - (v) integration is referred to as the process of organisation. (True/False)

11.4 ACCULTURATION, ASSIMILATION AND INTEGRATION

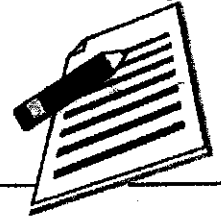
A comparison

you will be able to understand the concepts of acculturation, assimilation and integration with greater clarity. We attempt a comparative account of these three concepts highlighting the similarities and differences among them.

These three processes have certain common points as well as certain variations.

Some of the common points are mentioned below:

- i. The basic principles of culture contact are acculturation, assimilation and integration.
- ii. These form part and parcel of social processes. In other words, social processes constitute these three processes of social change in different culture and social group.
- iii. Borrowing and acquiring various cultural traits are also common features in all the three.



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iv. Transmission of cultural traits and their acceptance and adoption in different degree and extent is also common characteristic of these three processes.

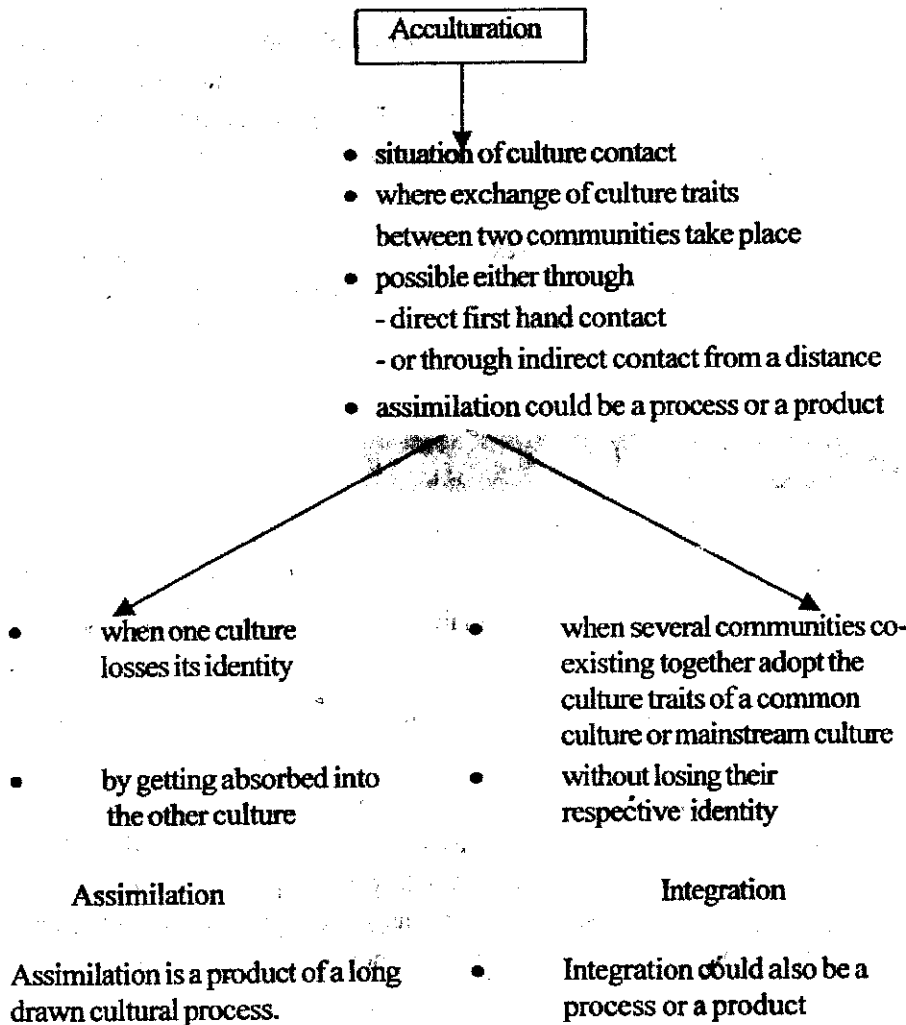
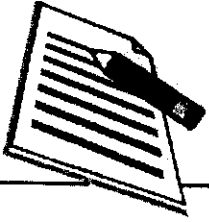


Fig 9.21: Relationship among Acculturation, Assimilation and Integration

11.5 THE DIFFERENCES AMONG-THEM COULD BE UNDERSTOOD FROM THE FOLLOWING

- i. Assimilation refers to fusion of culture whereas, acculturation relates to transmission of cultural elements on a larger scale over a wider area. Integration, on the other hand brings member together and maintains cohesiveness and solidarity in the group. It brings about stability in the group.
- ii. Acculturation is a continuous process as against integration, which is referred



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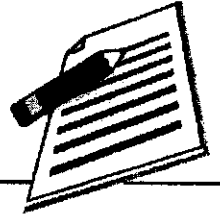
to as a process of organisation. As distinguished from these two, assimilation is the end product of social contacted interaction.

- iii. The process of assimilation takes a long period of time for fusion of different cultural values and ethos. As against this, an integration refers to cultural pluralism, voluntary and incomplete assimilation. This takes place in a short period of time. Acculturation at times is apparent, and causes quick social change.
- iv. Assimilation is also considered as a natural and unassisted process whereas acculturation and integration are social processes and assisted by culture contact and can be promoted directly.



WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT

- Acculturation means transmission of culture elements from one social group to another.
- Culture is not inborn. After birth, an individual learns cultural values, practices, traditions and norms.
- Social contact, even when slight or indirect, is sufficient for transmission from one cultural group to another.
- The changes in language in the course of contacts, conflicts and fusions of races and nationalities provide data for a more adequate description of the process of assimilation. In modern times the printing press, the book and the newspaper have tended to standardize languages. The press has made feasible language revival in connection with national movements on a scale impossible in earlier periods.
- The emphasis placed upon language as a medium of cultural transmission rests upon a sound principle. The idioms, particularly of a spoken language, probably reflect more accurately the historical experiences of the people more than history itself. The basis of unity among people is linguistic rather than racial.
- Adoption of material culture traits can acquire greater magnitude without associated changes in the corresponding non-material dimensions such as ideology, norms and value system.
- The rapidity and completeness of assimilation depends directly upon the intimacy of social contact. By a curious paradox, slavery, particularly household slavery, has probably been, besides formal intermarriage, the most efficient device for promoting assimilation.



Notes

Acculturation, assimilation and integration

- The ceremonial adoption and initiation of aliens and strangers among primitive peoples are examples of assimilation.
- Assimilation like integration is a matter of degree. Ethnic groups not only contribute to the host culture, but they retain many of their own ways, so that the result is cultural pluralism, a mosaic of several groups. Cultural pluralism may often represent voluntary, incomplete assimilation.
- The immigrants show that the process of assimilation has two parts or stages, although the two may overlap in point of time. One is suppression of the parent culture, the other is the acquisition of new ways, including the new language.



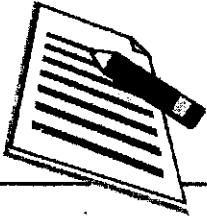
TERMINAL EXERCISE

Write answers in 100-200 words:

1. Explain the concept and meaning of
 - a) Acculturation
 - b) Integration and
 - c) Assimilation
2. Compare between acculturation, integration and assimilation.
3. Differentiate between the characteristics of Acculturation, Integration and Assimilation.

GLOSSARY

Insulation	:	Segregation, separate
Pristine	:	Pure, uncontaminated, traditional in true sense
Fusion	:	Amalgamation
Incorporated	:	included
Interpenetration	:	Pervade thoroughly
Patterned Interaction	:	Mutually designed action
Group solidarity	:	Group cohesion

**Notes**

Anomie	:	Usual social disorder
Ethnocentrism	:	Strong likeness for one's own's own culture or tradition; treating One's own culture as superior

**ANSWER TO INTEXT QUESTIONS****11.1**

- a. culture change
- b. two
- c. contact
- d. transport and communication
- e. transmission
- f. universal and continuous
- g. assimilation and integration

11.2

- a. (a)
- 2. (c)
- 3. Fusion
- 4. (c)

11.3

- i) True ii) False iii) True
- iv) False v) False

**SUGGESTED READINGS**

1. Ogboarn , W. F. and MfNimkoff (1958).
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3. Gllin, J2. and JP Gllin (1998), An Introduction of Sociology
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