

Revision Notes

Chapter 3: The Bases of Human Behaviour

- The human nervous system consists of billions of interconnected, highly specialised cells called neurons. Neurons or nerve cells control and coordinate all human behaviour.
- The central nervous system (CNS) consists of the brain and spinal cord. Peripheral nervous system branches out from the CNS to all parts of the body. It has two divisions: the somatic nervous system (related to the control of skeletal muscles) and the autonomic nervous system (related to control of internal organs). The autonomic system is sub-divided into the sympathetic and parasympathetic systems.
- Neurons have dendrites, which receive impulses; and the axon, which transmits impulses from cell body to other neurons or to muscle tissue.
- Every axon is separated by a gap called synapse. A chemical called neurotransmitter is released from the axon terminal that carries the message to the other neuron.
- The central core of the human brain includes hindbrain (consisting of the medulla, the pons, the reticular formation, and the cerebellum), the midbrain, and the thalamus and hypothalamus. Above the central core lies the forebrain or cerebral hemispheres.
- The limbic system is involved in the regulation of behaviours such as fighting, fleeing etc. It is comprised of hippocampus, amygdala and hypothalamus.
- The endocrine system consists of the glands; pituitary gland, thyroid gland, adrenal gland, pancreas and gonads. The hormones secreted by them play a crucial role in behaviour and development.
- In addition to biological factors, culture is considered an important determinant of human behaviour. It refers to the man-made part of the environment, which has two aspects — material and subjective. It refers to a shared way of life of a group of people through which they derive meanings of their behaviours and base their practices. These meanings and practices are transmitted through generations.
- Though, biological factors play a general enabling role, the development of specific skills and competencies is dependent upon the cultural factors and processes.

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- We learn about culture through the processes of enculturation and socialisation. Enculturation refers to all learning that take place without direct, deliberate teaching.
 - Socialisation is a process by which individuals acquire knowledge, skills and dispositions, which enable them to participate as effective members of groups and society. The most significant socialisation agents are parents, school, peer groups, mass media, etc.
 - Acculturation refers to cultural and psychological changes resulting from contact with other cultures. The acculturative strategies adopted by individuals during the course of acculturation are integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalisation.