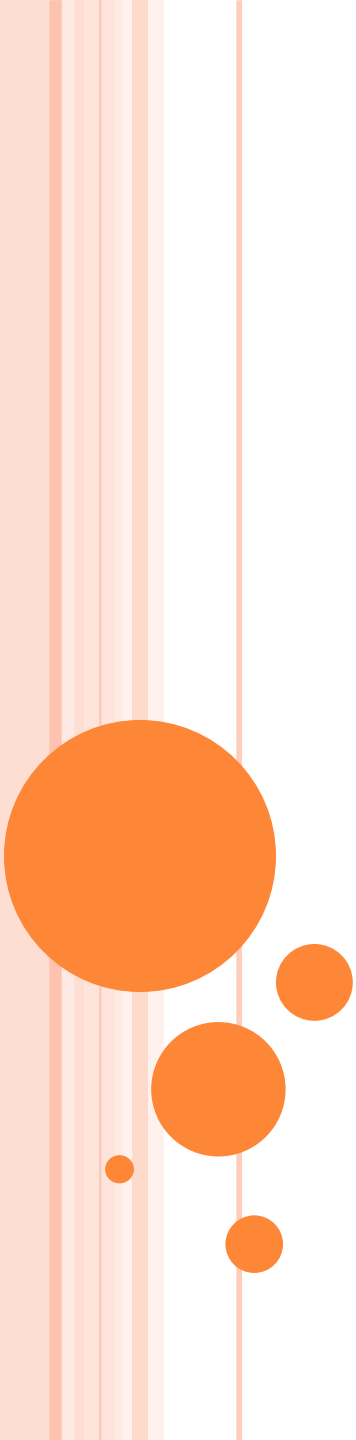




DEMOCRACY AND DIVERSITY

Class : X

ORIGIN OF SOCIAL DIFFERENCES

- ***Social Difference based on accident of birth -***
 - These social differences are mostly based on accident of birth. Normally people do not choose to belong to their community. They belong to it simply because they are born into it. These differences include being male / female, tall / short, black / coloured / white complexion, different physical abilities / disabilities, etc.
- ***Social Difference based on choice -***
 - Some of the differences are based on peoples' choice. For Some people choose to follow a religion other than the one in which they are born. Most of the people choose their educational fields, occupation, games, cultural activities, etc.



OVERLAPPING AND CROSS-CUTTING DIFFERENCES

➤ Overlapping Differences:-

1. Social division takes place when some social difference overlaps with other differences.
2. Social divisions are produced when one kind of social difference becomes more important than the other and people start feeling that they belong to different communities.
3. Overlapping social differences create possibilities of deep social divisions and tensions

+ For example:

- (i) The difference between the Blacks and Whites becomes a social division in the US because the Blacks tend to be poor, homeless and discriminated against.
- (ii) In India *Dalits* tend to be poor and landless. They often face discrimination and injustice.

○ Cross-cutting Differences:-

1. If social differences cross-cut one another, it is difficult to pit one group of people against the other.
 2. It means that groups that share a common interest on one issue are likely to be in different sides on different issue.
 3. Cross-cutting social differences are easier to accommodate
- + For example: In the Netherlands people predominantly follow Christianity but are divided between Catholics and Protestants. However in this country class and religion tend to cut across each other. Catholics and Protestants are about equally likely to be poor or rich. The result is that these two groups had no conflicts.
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POLITICS OF SOCIAL DIVISIONS:

How do these social divisions affect politics?

➤ **NEGATIVE IMPACT:**

- The combination of politics and social division is considered very dangerous and explosive.
- Democracy involves competing among various political parties. Their competition tends to divide any society.
- Competition in terms of some existing social divisions results in making social divisions into political divisions. This leads to conflict, violence or even disintegration of a country.
- This has happened in many countries like India, Sri Lanka, etc.
- Northern Ireland for many years has been the site of violent and bitter ethno-political conflicts.
- Political competition along religious and ethnic lines led to the disintegration of Yugoslavia into six independent countries.



➤ **Positive Impact:**

- Every expression of social division in politics does not lead to disasters because wherever social divisions exist, they are reflected in politics.
- In democracy it is only natural that political parties -
 - would talk about the divisions
 - make different promises to different communities
 - look after due representation of various communities
 - make policies to redress the grievances of disadvantaged communities.
- Social divisions also affect voting in most countries. People from one community tend to prefer some party and there are parties that focus only on one community. Yet all this does not lead to disintegration of the country.



Three Determinant	Easy to Accommodate	Difficult to Accommodate
Role of Identity: The outcome depends on how people perceive their identities.	It is much easier if the people see that their identities are multiple. It is complementary with the national identity. This helps them to stay together.	If people see their identities in singular and exclusive terms,
	For example: (i) A majority of Belgians feel that they are as much Belgian as they are Dutch or German-speaking. (ii) Most people in India see themselves as Indians as well as belonging to a state or language group or a social or religious community.	For example: People in Northern Ireland see themselves as only Catholics or Protestants. Their differences are difficult to reconcile.
Role of Political Leaders: The outcome depends on how political leaders raise the demands of any community.	It is easier to accommodate demands that are within the constitutional framework.	It is difficult to accommodate demands made at the cost of another community.
	For example : In Belgium, solution was reached through constitutional amendments acceptable to all groups.	For example: (i) The demand for 'only Sinhala' was at the cost of the interest and identity of the Tamil community in Sri Lanka. (ii) In Yugoslavia, the leaders of different ethnic communities presented their demands in such a way that these could not be accommodated within a single country.

Role of Government: The outcome depends on how the government reacts to demands of different groups.	If the government is willing to share power and accommodate the reasonable demands of minority community, social divisions become less threatening for the country.	If government tries to suppress reasonable demand in the name of national unity, the result is often disintegration of the country.
	For example : In Belgium, government worked out successful power sharing arrangement strengthening the unity of the country.	For example : In Sri Lanka, denial of rights to Tamils by the government has undermined the unity of the country.



DIFFERENT PATHS TO FIGHT FOR RECOGNITION AND TO ACCOMMODATE DIVERSITY:

- People who feel marginalised, deprived and discriminated have to fight against the injustice. They adopt different methods:-
- Sometimes people take the democratic path. They voice their demands in a peaceful and constitutional manner, seek a fair position through elections.
- The struggle against severe injustices and inequalities sometimes takes the path of violence and defiance of state power.
- However, history shows that democracy is the best way to fight for recognition and also to accommodate diversity.

