

DIVERSITY AND DISCRIMINATION

Examples of Diversity in India

- There are 8 major religions in the world and followers of all these religions are found in India.
- There are more than 1600 languages and even more dialects being spoken in India.
- There are more than a hundred dance forms in India.
- There are many styles of mural paintings in different parts of India.

Prejudice

When someone judges another person in a negative way it is called prejudice. People often have certain prejudices about other people who may appear different. This difference can be in terms of facial features, accent, eating habit or costumes.

- This is a normal human nature that we feel comfortable in the group of people who appear like us and behave like us. We tend to feel uncomfortable in the group of people who may not appear like us.
- Since India is a diverse country, people from different regions look entirely different. They not only differ in their appearance but also in eating habit, accent and costumes. Following are some examples of prejudices which happen because of diversity.
- When a person from the North East roams in Delhi, he/she is often looked down by the local people. You often read news about people from the North East being harassed in Delhi or even in Bangalore.
- A person from south India is often called Madrasi when he goes to the northern part of the country.
- A person from Bihar is usually considered as less intelligent and is subject of ridicule in most of the metropolitan cities of India.

- A person from rural areas is considered to be illiterate, unhygienic and unsophisticated.
- A person from urban areas is considered to be greedy and cunning. People think that a city dweller does not have respect for personal relationships.
- In most of the cases, prejudices are harmless. But in some cases, our prejudiced behavior may turn to be harmful for the person at the receiving end. For example; when you do not behave properly with a person because of your prejudices, it can be very bad for self respect of that person.

submissive in nature. They are supposed to have keen interest in music and painting. They cry too often. They need to learn cooking, doing household chores and tidying up the house. Boys are supposed to be aggressive and naughty. They are supposed to have keen interest in adventure sports and outdoor sports. Boys should not cry because crying is a sign of weakness. When a boy becomes adult, he is supposed to earn money to bring the bacon at home.

- Gender based stereotypes are often portrayed in films, advertisements and TV serials. Almost all the advertisements related to detergents, washing machines, dishwashers, etc. show a woman as the main protagonist. On the other hand, all the stunts shown in a bike ad is performed by ferocious looking men.
- Apart from gender-based stereotypes, we also see stereotypes based on religion, caste and place of origin.

- Inequality and Discrimination
- When someone acts on the basis of prejudices, the act may result in discrimination. Debarring someone from certain facilities only because of difference in religion, gender, caste or regional origins is called discrimination. Following are some examples of discrimination:
- **Gender-based Discrimination:** A girl is not allowed to go to school beyond standard five or six is an example of discrimination. Similarly, most of the girls are not allowed to select a career of their choice rather they are forced into marriage. In some families, girls are not allowed to wear western dresses while boys in such families often wear western dresses.
- **Religion-based Discrimination:** A person does not get a job only because he belongs to a particular religion. A person is not allowed to enter some public places; especially the places of worship; because he/she belongs to another religion.
- **Caste-based Discrimination:** Caste system is an age-old system in India. According to this system, people were kept under different castes. A person from a particular caste was supposed to do only a particular kind of work. For example; a person from Mahar caste could only engage in cleaning the garbage and clearing dead carcasses from the village. In spite of getting education and developing skills, people could not change their occupation.
- Dr. B R Ambedkar belonged to the Mahar caste. He had suffered various kinds of discrimination right from his childhood. Even today, many people from the untouchable castes suffer different types of discrimination especially in villages and small towns. A person from the untouchable caste is not allowed to enter a temple. He is not allowed to take drinking water from the village well.
- Caste system was so deep-rooted that it was difficult to come out of the pre-defined social levels. The son of a potter could only become a potter and nothing else. The son of a cobbler could only become a cobbler and nothing else. The task of conducting religious rituals could only be done by a Brahmin. A person from the so-called lower castes was not allowed to attend the feast being organized by upper-caste people.

- **Striving for Equality**

- Many of our freedom fighters also fought against caste-based discrimination which was prevalent in India. Gandhiji coined the term 'Harijan' for those from the untouchable castes. He did great deal of work in removing prejudices from people's minds. B R Ambedkar was another leading figure who fought against caste-based discrimination.
- When Indian became a free nation, the founding fathers of our nation began the process of building a new nation. Caste-based discrimination was made a crime as per the constitution.