

Revision Notes
Class-6 Political Science
Chapter 2 - Diversity and Discrimination

In the previous chapter we studied the importance of diversity in bringing variation in the country. These variations are sometimes not accepted by the people peaceably and that leads to discriminations and stereotyping. This chapter will teach us how differences lead to inequalities, stereotyping, and discriminations.

“My language, My Culture is the Best”

In the previous chapter, we have seen that India is the miniature version of the world - geographically and demographically. There are twenty two official languages in India that are spoken by its citizens. But around 121 major languages are spoken by the people of India. Your book says that there are at least 1600 languages in India that serve as the mother tongues of the people. The customs that you see in one part of the country can be entirely different from the customs that you see in the other parts. Each of the eight major religions of the world are practised in India.

However, this diversity can sometimes look intimidating to people. It is the nature of people to hang out with familiar people. Different customs or traditions make them uncomfortable. This is the basic reason why people of one custom sometimes fail to establish an amicable relationship with the people of another custom. And this is how differences - the negative ones - take birth.

Sometimes people can form untoward opinions towards unfamiliar culture, different religions, different languages, different customs - anything that they are not familiar with. These opinions are malicious in nature. These opinions are mostly baseless and pre-determined. The predetermined malicious opinions that people have of anything is called Prejudice. This prejudice stems from one's notion that his culture, his language, his religion are the best and those of others are inferior.

Sometimes this prejudice can lead to serious enmity between communities, cultures and language speakers. These prejudices hinder establishing a relationship of trust and friendship between communities.

Stereotypes: The First Step Towards Forming Prejudice

As we said, prejudices are formed from the predetermined notions that people have about a particular culture, religion or a group of language speakers. Once we assume that the group XYZ is bad, we tend to paint every person belonging to the group with the same negative colour. This is called a stereotype. An easy way to understand stereotypes is to examine the way society expects boys and girls to behave. It is the prevalent assumption that - “Boys don’t feel pain.” From childhood, they are told not to cry because they are boys. So as they grow up, these poor boys start gulping their tears so that their friends and society do not ridicule them. This is very damaging to the boys from a psychological point of view. On the other hand, the girls in Indian society are expected to be soft-spoken. Naughty girls are often scolded by their parents for not ‘acting like a girl.’ To this date, many people think that cooking is the duty of the women and girls are trained to cook from an early age. This abnormal way of clipping their wings ruins the lives of thousands of Indian girls. From the above two paragraphs, you can see that there are two sets of behaviours - one set is deemed to be appropriate for boys and the other one to be appropriate for girls. But this segregation is entirely baseless and must be done away with. Stereotypes almost always are baseless.

Stereotype and Prejudice Breed Inequality and Discrimination

Now, when somebody acts on the preconceived notions that we discussed above, then it will harm the person who is subject to the prejudice. For example, as we said in many families girls are supposed to get married and perform the household duties when they grow up. This prejudice breaks their dream of advancing in the professional sphere. The stereotype that boys don’t cry is creating millions of men who have trained themselves not to show sympathy or care. As a result, the nation is getting filled with an uncaring population and with women who can only cook.

Can such a nation be strong? If people are prejudiced against the people of any particular caste (for example Dalits), then people of that caste might not be allowed to use the facilities that others use, and live in the place where others live. This is exactly why you often hear news of the Dalits not being allowed to draw water from the public well. The same happens in the case of prejudices concerning religion - a lot more violently. Sometimes differences in language and customs become a source reason for prejudices and discrimination. For example, in India people tend to romanticise English. Often people who speak incorrect English are made fun of. Again, suppose in a state language A is prevalent. When somebody who knows only language B comes to this state, he might not be accepted well by the people of that state.

Diversity in Financial Status

While diversity is welcomed, when it comes to economic status ,diversity does more harm than good. In India, people belong to diverse economic backgrounds. A student who is able to read in a premium school will get more opportunities in the professional sphere than his other counterpart who reads in a government school. A person who can pay for private medical care does not have to jostle to get a bed. He will receive the best in class medical treatment whereas the person who can only afford government medical care has to be content with the bare minimum medical care. Due to this poor people tend to die more of illness than the rich and privileged ones.

Discrimination Based on Work and Caste In India

In India people of different religions work together and even share the same society. We also see diversity at the workplaces, jobs, and schools . People do so many different kind of jobs. Some are office goers, some are salesmen, some are programmers, some are drivers, some are cobblers etc. Now the question arises, do all these professionals get the same respect? How many times have you heard people addressing a vegetable seller as ‘tu’ instead of ‘aap’? This is because we

tend to attach respect to the kind of work people do. Some people treat vendorship as a small work. This is another form of discrimination.

In the ancient days, separate works were for people belonging to separate castes. Such as, Shudras were not allowed to do the work of the Brahmans. Brahmans were the upper caste of the society and they were the only ones allowed to become a priest. As a result, people did not have the opportunity of advancing. Dr B.R Ambedkar tells his experience of being refused by the Bullock Cart owners just because he was a Dalit. The Bullock Cart drivers were of the opinion that if they let B.R Ambedkar in, he would “pollute” the carts. Imagine the sense of humiliation that Dr Ambedkar had felt at that time.

The fight for Equality

During the time the British ruled India, people not only struggled to banish the British but they also struggled in demolishing all the beliefs, stereotypes, and discriminations created by them. That is when the Constitution was being made. It was unambiguously written that in India people of every religion, caste, culture, language, creed, and customs will be respected. The constitution gave legitimacy to the diversity of India. Although India suffers from the presence of inequality till date. But people are always standing up and fighting for their rights.

Important Questions and Answers

1. How is inequality connected with stereotypes?

Ans: In the NCERT class VI book of Social Science, we find an example of Muslim girls being subjected to the stereotype of not getting an education. It is believed that Muslim parents are unwilling to send their girl children to schools. It isn't as simple as it seems. Generally, people of the Muslim community are poor and hence, education takes a back seat when it comes to the question of survival. However, in states like Kerala, where efforts have been made to help the backward section of the society to get access to schools, the parents did come forward and enrolled their girl children to the schools.

2. Should we blame diversity for inequality?

Ans: Diversity can sometimes lead to stereotypes and inequality. But in countries where the demographic is not as diverse as we see in India, we still find some of the other kinds of inequality. For example, even if we rule out language, culture, religion-based diversity there will be people of varying economic status. And this variation will lead to inequality - anywhere in the world.

3. How does a country become weak when people start seeing diversity with hatred?

Ans: When diversity is not welcomed, people tend to adhere to the rules set by society. This hampers the emergence of innovation and new ideas. For example, if society expects every man to be heartless who should not cry then that nation would become a nation of soldiers where emotions are not valued.

4. What is the stereotype?

Ans: Oftentimes we judge a person's character or behaviour based on the view we have of the community, caste or religion he belongs to. We don't take into account his own uniqueness. This preconceived notion about a person based on the features of his community or language is what we call a stereotype.

5. What is prejudice?

Ans: If the stereotype is the cause then prejudice is the effect. When we entertain some preconceived notion about a person or a culture or a community,

our actions towards that person or culture or community get biased. This biased action or view is called prejudice.