

## Discrimination-Inequality, Stereotypes and Prejudice

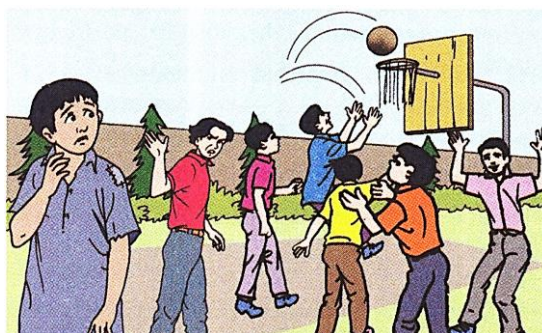
### Summary

1. Discrimination means treating a group of people less favourable than others because of factors like skin colour, gender, nationality, religion, culture, status and disability.
2. Forming rigid ideas about a certain group and being judgemental about them results in stereotypes.
3. Prejudice means to 'pre-judge' someone.
4. Stereotypes and prejudices lead to discrimination.
5. We should respect one another and accept our differences. Tolerance helps us to learn about different cultures, new ideas, etc.
6. The Constitution of India guarantees equality on the grounds of religion, caste, creed, etc.

### Introduction

When you look around and you see people different from you, what do you think about the differences? Why are some people so different from you? Do you treat them differently?

In the previous chapter, we viewed the positive aspect of diversity. However, diversity has a dark side too. In this chapter, we will find out how diversity impacts us negatively. Not all appreciate diversity. When a person thinks that only one particular way is the best and the right way to do a thing, he ends up not respecting people who may prefer to do things differently. Such people may rarely associate with the members of certain groups. Now assess the situation in the picture.



### Discuss

- Why do you think the child is not allowed to play with the rest?
- What do you think about this kind of behaviour?
- Can you recollect any such incident where someone was treated this way?

### WHAT IS DISCRIMINATION?

Diversity exists naturally while discrimination is man-made. Discrimination refers to treating a group of people less favourably than others. This may be because of their skin colour, gender, nationality, religion, culture, status, disability, age and many more aspects. In most cases, people who are discriminated against are judged as 'inferior'. Some are called hurtful names, some are not allowed to participate in events, some are excluded from jobs and clubs, some are attacked and beaten; some are not given promotions or unfairly paid less for doing the same work; and some homes or places of worship are vandalized.

### Know a Little More

Deepa Malik begged a silver medal in the Women's shotput -F53 event at the 2016 Rio Paralympics Games on 12<sup>th</sup> September, 2016 with a personal best throw of 4.61 metres. With this historic achievement, Deepa became the first Indian woman and the oldest athlete ever to win a medal at the Paralympic Games. Sometimes, we take it for granted that a particular thing or activity is not meant for the physically challenged people. Society then reinforces that belief and starts discriminating.



Discrimination is unfair and inhuman

### REASONS FOR DISCRIMINATION

#### Stereotypes and Prejudice

To understand discrimination better and what leads to discrimination, we need to know two more terms: Stereotype and Prejudice. Our opinions, beliefs, thought processes, ideologies etc., lead us to form a mindset. Sometimes we form *rigid*<sup>2</sup> ideas about a certain group of people. When we group races or individuals together and make a judgement about them, we stereotype the group or the individual.

If you say that Africans are good at sports you stereotype them, because you are indicating that everyone of that race is a good athlete. If you say that women are good homemakers and bad drivers, you are stereotyping women. Again, saying that men are strong and responsible, is to stereotype men. A stereotype is a fixed idea or belief about a specific group, individual or a thing that is based on prior assumptions. These classifications can be positive or negative.

### Know a Little More

The term stereotype is derived from the Greek words—"stereos" meaning firm or solid and "typos", meaning impression, hence, solid impression.



Stereotypes are generally formed on the basis of what we read in books and magazines, see in movies or television, or hear from family and friends. Stereotyping a group means to ignore the unique qualities of individuals by painting all members of the group with the same brush. Say for example, you have two finalists in the Miss Universe event—one is a dark-skinned model and the other is a fair-skinned one. You tend to favour the fair-skinned finalist. Even a matrimonial advertisement highlights the fair complexion of a girl primarily. Why is this so? This is because you have a generalised idea that fair skin is better than dark skin. This way, stereotyping prevents us from judging correctly and leads to discrimination.

Prejudice literally means 'pre-judging' someone and is also based on prior assumption. However, unlike stereotype, prejudice is a negative opinion about people and things without knowing all the facts. Thus, prejudice means to judge someone negatively or see him as inferior. Prejudice can be based on: people's religious beliefs, colour of their skin, the region they come from, the accent they speak in, the clothes they wear, and even their gender. We often become so accustomed to seeing people in our city or town resemble us in colour, status, etc., that we become judgemental about those who are different from us. Often our prejudices about others are so strong that we do not want to make friends with them.

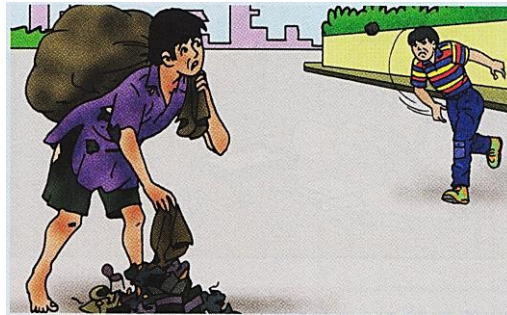
Imagine that you are a North Indian and a new student from the South India joins your class. The student has a different skin colour and accent. His mannerisms are different too. Will you laugh at that student and *mimic*<sup>3</sup> him rudely? If you do so, you will be showing prejudice.

Prejudices exist in all societies. Prejudice divides people and leads to discrimination. Often, prejudice turns into hatred or unfair treatment to a person. We should not allow prejudice to develop in us.

## Inequality

Discrimination and inequality can be seen in many forms. Women are discriminated against at workplaces and even at home; some look down upon rag pickers and shoo them away; we keep away from people with HIV for no

**Q. Do you shoo- away a rag picker like this?**



reason; many clubs have restrictive membership policies, and so on.

You must have seen that some people own a palatial house while some live in slums; some go to study in a foreign university while some give up studies to take up a job to support the family. Unequal distribution of wealth, property, opportunity to go to school, be educated and take up a respectable occupation are some factors responsible for inequality among people. Inequality is not a desirable thing for society, while diversity is necessary and needs to be promoted. Inequalities need to be narrowed down to bring in development of society. Today, though the Indian economy is on the firm path of reform, inequality persists. Social reforms like reservations in educational institutes for the poor are steps towards wiping out inequalities in the society.

## FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION

Let us talk in detail about some forms of discrimination.

### Discrimination based on Gender

Gender bias or gender discrimination is unequal treatment to girls or women, considering them inferior to boys or men. In India, this difference

## BETI BACHAO BETI PADHAO

Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) was launched by the Prime Minister in January, 2015 at Panipat, Haryana. The programme addresses the declining Child Sex Ratio and the women empowerment issue. It is a combined effort of Ministries of Women and Child Development, Health and Family Welfare and Human Resource Development.

The scheme is trying to bring about a shift in the way the society looks at the girl child.

### CASE1

The Sarpanch from Bibipur, Haryana started a 'Selfie with Daughter' initiative. After this, the Prime Minister of the country urged people to share their selfies with daughters and it became a world-wide hit.

### CASE 2

Mansa district in Punjab has launched an initiative called 'Udaan - Sapneya Di Duniya De Rubaru'. According to this initiative, girls in classes VI-XII have the opportunity to spend one day with a professional they aspire to be. This will help them to make better decisions about their career.

is noticed in social evils such as female foeticide<sup>4</sup> or infanticide, dowry system<sup>5</sup>, patriarchal system<sup>6</sup> and child marriage. Gender discrimination and gender-based division can affect a girl child's growth, health, education, and thus her entire life. The Indian government has launched Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme dedicated to the welfare of every girl child.



**Q. Do you find any gender based discrimination in your surroundings? What do you feel about it?**

Discrimination based on Race Europeans colonised Africa, Asia and the America, and began to consider themselves superior of these continents. Race refers to a group of people who share the same physical characteristics such as skin tone, hair texture, and facial features. People belonging to different races have different skin-colour. Racism is the belief that some 'races' are superior to others —based on vague ideas of characteristics (like skin colour) or ethnic background. Racial discrimination is any act that treats people of other races in a different manner. In South Africa, racial discrimination gave birth to Apartheid which means 'apartness' in Afrikaans. We shall read about it in the next chapter.



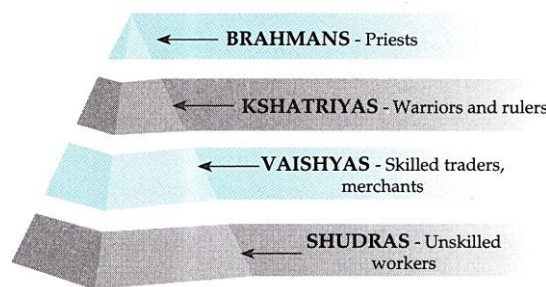
An example of racial discrimination

**Discuss**

- Discuss the episode of racial discrimination in the 'Big Brother' show involving Jade Goody and Shilpa Shetty.
- Many Indians opted to return from Australia in 2010. Discuss the reasons.

**Discrimination based on Caste**

Caste system is an ancient practice in India in which the society is divided into groups based on their occupation. The four main castes are Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. Below them are the untouchables. Shudras are termed Scheduled Castes and dalits<sup>7</sup> today.



Caste system hierarchy

Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar who belonged to the cast of untouchables led the struggles for equality and fought for the rights of Dalits. Ambedkar and discrimination by the teachers of his school and was made to sit on the floor overcoming all social obstacles, Ambedkar became the first so-called untouchable to complete graduation in India. He got a scholarship and left for New York for higher studies. On his return to India he started a weekly journal called Mooknayak, where he criticised the *orthodox*<sup>9</sup> caste system. He demanded reservations for the Dalits. Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar later became the first Law Minister of Independent India. He was the architect of the Indian Constitution, the written document for Indian laws.



Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar,  
a reformer who worked  
hard to eliminate social  
discrimination in India

Today, in order to *mitigate*<sup>10</sup> the backwardness of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes, the Indian law has provided a quota system for them. A percentage of posts are reserved for them for employment in government as well as in public sectors. Also, special provision of seats have been made in all public and private educational institutions. The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989 prevents atrocities against members of the Dalit community and other backward castes

### **Know a Little More**

Jyotirao Phule was thinker, activist and social reformer. He was also called Mahatma. Phule and his wife, Savitribai phule were pioneers of women's education in India. He opened a school for girls in India in August 1948.

### **GANDHIS EXPERIENCE WITH APARTHEID IN SOUTH AFRICA**

Dada Abdulla said, "Make a trip to Pretoria in the Transvaal to help our client." The Indian left for Pietermaritzburg. There, he bought a first-class ticket and went and sat in the first-class compartment. A European entered the compartment. On seeing the Indian, he called out to the railway officials and said, "Remove him. 'Coolies' and non-whites are not permitted in first-class compartments." The Indian produced his ticket, but was forcibly pushed out of the train, and his luggage was tossed out on to the platform. The train steamed away. Later, this man returned to India and wrote in his autobiography, "the cold was extremely bitter. My overcoat was in my luggage, but I did not dare to ask for it lest I should be insulted again, so I sat and shivered."

### **STEPS TOWARDS EQUALITY AND HARMONY**

With such diversity in religion, language, dress, customs and traditions in the country, it is natural that there are differences of opinion on various issues. However, the Constitution of India provides for a framework in which these differences can be resolved. The Constitution of India which came into force on 26th January, 1950 ensures general welfare for the common people.

The introduction to the Constitution called the Preamble declares India as a Sovereign, Socialist, Secular and Democratic Republic that guarantees social, economic and political justice to all.

The Constitution lists some Fundamental Rights to guarantee non-discrimination. These rights are enforced by the court of law. The Fundamental rights have also been aimed at overturning the inequalities in Indian social practices.

- They have been used to abolish untouchability and caste system.
- They prohibit discrimination on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth.
- They also forbid trafficking of human beings, child labour and forced labour.

- They provide religious freedom to all citizens of India declaring India to be a secular state.
- They protect cultural and educational rights of ethnic and religious minorities by allowing them to preserve their languages and also establish their own education institutions.
- To bring about equality in society, the Constitution makes special provisions for the advancements of any socially or educationally backward class or scheduled castes or scheduled tribes by providing reservation of posts for them.
- Right to freedom of speech and expression gives one the right to freely express one's views through press, assembly, association or union.