

Humans would be bored if they eat the same dish and wear the same clothes everyday. That is also the case with their activities. When people go from one place to another, they keep their food habits and clothing habits. If they live at another place for a long time they adopt some of the food habits and clothing habits of that place. Thus comes out a mixed or hybrid culture. **Culture** means sharing of the way of life, customs, art and beliefs by people in a particular society. Culture is a very long habit which takes at least hundreds of years to form, develop and continue. The languages also have taken thousands of years to develop in different dialects.

Natural Diversity

India is a land of diversity and many different religious groups, castes and races are found here. There are mainly three races—black, yellow and white people with increasing heights and differences in the shape of the face, nose and lips and colour of the hair and eyes. Race is a natural diversity. People live in different kind of reliefs—coast, plain, mountains and deserts and in different climates. Seasons change to add spice to the diversity of lives. Different kinds of crops are grown in different regions. So, people use to eat different kind of food grown in their region, that too changing with seasons. People wear different kinds of clothes, cotton or woollen according to seasons and climates with different kinds of design. People offer things what they eat and wear to deities in worship. Their occupations are often linked to the resources found in that region. Thus biological and geographical diversity prevail everywhere.

If we look around we see different types of plants, flowers, trees, birds and animals. There is diversity in the environment as well as in human beings. It is this variety that makes our world such an interesting place. If people did not always want to try something new and different, no inventions or progress would have taken place, no adventures undertaken, nor talks of adventures would have been told. No wonder, it is said that variety or diversity is the spice of life.



Interaction between Diverse Cultures

From early times people travelled in search of food and work. While looking for more fertile lands, they had to change their old lifestyles in order to adopt to new places. Thus, they formed new habits and customs. As a result their language, food, religion and customs became **a mixture of the old and the new**. People began to trade with other groups in different places and thus, many of them were influenced by the lifestyle of that place. It led to unity in diversity. We do many things that are similar except that we do them in different ways. Our lives are all about moving from place to place for work and with each move our cultural traditions and way of life slowly become part of the new place we are in. Similarly, in our own neighbourhoods we live close to people from several communities. A group of families living in the same area having common interests is called a **community**. Our daily lives are about the ways in which we do things together and hear stories about each other's lives, customs and traditions.

Today, in the age of aeroplanes and e-mails, in an age where travelling for work or leisure has become more common, faster and easier, there is a **steady exchange** of cultural traditions. We carry our traditions to new places and also adopt to the ways of life of that place.

Differences and Inequalities

Historical developments shaped and influenced different social groups. These differences can be divided into economic, social and political. Some people are poorer than others and do not have the resources and opportunities that others enjoy. Thus, differences in income levels lead to inequality. A prime example of social inequality is the caste system, which for long time, was the basis of the social structure in many parts of India. We have political equality in voting rights : one adult person one vote but there is a large gap of authority and facilities between a minister and a peon. That is political inequality. Earlier the society was divided into different groups depending upon the occupation or trade, that is, the work each did and each was supposed to remain in the same group only. If the parents were a particular type of craftsmen, the child also had to carry on with that type of trade. It was easy to learn and acquire skills under the guidance of parents. There were no crafts training institutes those days. People generally were satisfied with their occupation or trade. Thus, it soon became a hereditary profession and one was used to be called by its occupation. No change could be made in the profession. This was the main reason that created the situation of inequality and caste system. It led to difficulties in the life of some groups when political ambitions of other groups kept the former behind.

Origins of Social Differences

We all experience social differences based on accident of birth in our everyday lives. People around us are male or female, they are tall and



short, have different kinds of complexions or have different physical abilities or disabilities. But all kinds of social differences are not based on accident of birth. Some of the differences are based on our choices. For example, some people do not believe in God or any religion. Some people choose to follow a religion other than the one in which they were born. Most of us choose what to study, which occupation to take up and which games or cultural activities to take part in. All these lead to formation of social groups that are based on our choices. But every social difference does not lead to social division. People belonging to different social groups share differences and similarities.

It is fairly common for people belonging to the same religion to feel that they do not belong to the same community, because their caste or sect is very different. It is also possible for people from different religions to have the same caste and feel close to each other. Rich and poor persons from the same family often do not keep close relations with each other for they feel they are very different. Thus, we all have more than one social group. **We have different 'identities' in different contexts.**

The difference between the Blacks and Whites became a social division in the US because the Blacks tend to be poor, homeless and discriminated against. In our country *Dalits* tend to be poor and landless. They often face discrimination and injustice. Situations of this kind produce social divisions, when one kind of social difference becomes more important than the other and people start feeling that they belong to different communities.

Groups that share a common interest on one issue are likely to be in different sides on a different issue.

Influence of History on Diversity

The history of invasions and foreign rules made the hatred gaps between the social groups and now the political groups (created out of combination of various social groups). Wars were fought for capturing land, cattle, belongings and people (as slaves). The successors of one conqueror were defeated by other powerful invaders. The situation continued in its worst form till some wise persons introduced the rule of the public with equality for all. But political equality did not assured the economic and social equality.

Two Examples of Diversity : Ladakh and Kerala

The geography and history are often tied in the cultural life of a region. While Ladakh and Kerala are quite different in terms of their geographical features, the history of both regions has seen similar cultural influences. Geographical features have influenced the life style of people. Both regions have seen similar historical influences, like foreign invasion and intermingling of different religions. We shall study how the different geographical locations of these two regions

had influenced the **food** the people eat, the **clothes** they wear and the **work** they do. We shall also see how the geographical and historical influences have shaped their cultural life.

Ladakh



The dry barren landscape of the mountainous desert of Ladakh.

Ladakh lies in the mountains towards the eastern part of Jammu and Kashmir. It is a cold desert as very little of agriculture is possible in this region. It does not receive any rain and is covered in snow for a large part of the year. Very few trees can grow in this region. People collect drinking water from the melting snow during the summer months. Each family owns some goats, cows and yak-cows. People eat meat and milk products like cheese and butter.

People also keep sheep for getting wool. The special species of sheep kept here yield a high prized wool known as Pashmina. The people carefully collect the wool and sell this to traders from Kashmir where it is woven into shawls. Pashmina shawls are very warm and therefore, costly. Obviously the people of Ladakh wear woollen clothes.



Weaving a pashmina shawl

Ladakh had many passes, therefore, it was considered a good trade route. Caravans carrying textiles, spices, raw silk and carpets travelled through these passes to Tibet. Ladakh is also called 'Little Tibet'. Buddhism reached Tibet via Ladakh. Islam was introduced here more than four hundred years ago. Ladakh has a very rich oral tradition of songs and poems. Both Buddhists and Muslims perform and sing the local versions of the Tibetan national epic, the Kesar Saga.

Kerala



The boat race at the Onam festival in Kerala.

Kerala is a state of India situated in the south-west corner of India. It is surrounded by the Arabian Sea on one side, Western Ghats, the hills on the other. On the hills are cultivated a number of spices like pepper, cloves and cardamoms. This region came on the world trade map because of these spices. Jewish and Arab traders were the first to come here. St. Thomas, the Apostle of Christ, is said to have come here nearly 2000 years ago and preached Christianity. Many Arab traders also settled down here. Their religion was Islam. Vasco da Gama, a Portuguese discovered the sea route to India from Europe and landed with his ship here. As a result of all these various historical influences, people in Kerala practise different religions such as Judaism, Islam and Christianity along with Hinduism and Buddhism. Kerala's cultural heritage has derived from all these factors. The snake-boat races during Onam, the harvest festival are very famous and so is the unique elephant march.

People of Kerala eat rice, fish and vegetables. The fertile land and climate are suited for the cultivation of rice. They catch fish from the sea. The fishing nets used here look exactly like the Chinese fishing nets and are called **Cheena-Vala**. Even the utensil used for frying is called the **Cheena Chatti**. These words show the influence of Chinese traders.



Chinese Fishing Nets

Thus, both the regions, Ladakh and Kerala, were influenced by the Chinese and Arab traders. The geography of Kerala that helped cultivation of spices and the special geographical location (trade route) of Ladakh and its wool attracted the traders.

To Enjoy Diversity

Children like reading and hearing stories and adventures about different animals, people and even superman or spiderman. Some of them enjoy making up stories themselves. They get lots of ideas to make up new stories from a story. People who write stories get their ideas from all sorts of diverse things — books, real life and their imagination. Can you write a story using only one person, one tree, one animal, one colour only. It is diversity of people, places, things and events that help to knit a fantasy in the story.



Pt. Nehru delivering an Independence Day speech

Diversity as a Source of Strength

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru coined the phrase, “**Unity in Diversity**” to describe our country, India. Nehruji, in his book ‘**Discovery of India**’ wrote that Indian unity is not something imposed from the outside but rather, ‘It was something deeper and within its fold, the widest tolerance of belief and custom was practised and every variety acknowledged and even encouraged’. India’s national anthem, composed by Rabindranath Tagore, is another expression of the unity of India. Songs and symbols that emerged during the freedom struggle still serve as a constant reminder to the younger generation of our country’s **rich tradition of respect for diversity**. Thus, India’s diversity has always been recognised as a source of strength. The Indian flag was used as a symbol of protest against the British by all the Indian people everywhere. Women and men from different cultural, religious, economic and regional backgrounds worked together to decide joint actions and they went to jail together to oppose the British. They all worked together and found different ways to oppose the foreign rule. The British thought they could divide Indians because they were so different and then continue to rule them. The British, no doubt, managed to divide the Indians and rule over them but only for a short period. The people showed how they could be different and yet be united in their battle against the British. They all followed the dictum of ‘Unity in Diversity’ and achieved their goal of driving away the British out of the country, finally.

Communities also depend on other communities. For example, the village community supplies food to towns and it depends on the urban communities to supply it with clothes, electricity, machines for agriculture, etc. Thus, they depend on each other for various needs. Interdependence between communities is what for ages a link and a bond of unity.

To encourage unity in diversity our Constitution guarantees the Fundamental Rights to every individual and community.



Key Words

- » Diversity : to be more varied; difference in race, caste, religion, etc.
- » Natural diversity : biological diversities such as difference in body shapes and measures and geographical diversity of living places—coast, mountains, plains, deserts.
- » Cultural diversity : man-made diversity like castes, religions, languages, dress, food, etc.
- » Culture : all kinds of learning— food, dress, beliefs, art, music, literature of a society.
- » Caste system : division of the society into groups on the basis of occupations of the people.
- » Heritage : things, habits and beliefs handed down from the past by tradition.
- » Race : natural differences in the colour, shape and height of humans.

SUMMARY

- ▶ India is a land of diversity and many different religious groups, castes and races are found here. There are mainly three races—black, yellow and white people.
- ▶ People eat different kind of food grown in their region and wear clothes according to the climate of their region. Their occupations are often linked with the resources found in that region.
- ▶ We do many things that are similar except that we do them in different ways.
- ▶ We carry our traditions to new places and also adapt to the ways of life of that place.
- ▶ Earlier, the society was divided into different groups depending upon the occupations or trades.
- ▶ The history of invasions and foreign rules made the hatred gaps between the social groups and political groups.
- ▶ While Ladakh and Kerala are quite different in terms of their geographical features, the history of both regions has seen similar cultural influences.

Exercise Time

A. Tick (✓) the only correct choice amongst the following :

1. It means sharing of the way of life, customs, art and beliefs by people in a particular society :
a. Culture b. Diversity c. Community d. Discrimination
2. A group of families living in the same area having common interests is called a :
a. society b. relatives c. community d. group
3. It lies in the mountains towards the eastern part of Jammu and Kashmir :
a. Kerala b. Ladakh c. Himalayas d. Ganga
4. People of _____ eat rich, fish and vegetables :
a. Nagpur b. Uttar Pradesh c. Harayana d. Kerala
5. _____ Coined the phrase "Unity in Diversity" to describe our country :
a. Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru b. Mahatma Gandhi c. Indira Gandhi d. Shubhas Chandra Bose

B. Fill in the blanks :

1. People move from one place to another in search of _____.
2. Ladakh is also called the _____ Tibet.
3. Kerala is surrounded by the _____ on one side and _____ on the other side.
4. Differences can be divided into economic, _____ and political.
5. The harvest festival of Kerala is called _____.



C. Match the following :

- | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Cold Desert | a. Onam |
| 2. Pashmina Shawl | b. Muslims |
| 3. Spices | c. Kerala |
| 4. Arab Traders | d. Woven in Kashmir |
| 5. Snake-boat race | e. Ladakh |

D. Write true (T) or False (F) against the following statements in given brackets :

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| 1. People eat similar kind of food all over India. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Cultural diversity is a kind of natural diversity. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Kerala came on the world trade map because of the spices. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. The history of Ladakh and Kerala both have seen cultural influences of Chinese and Arab traders. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. India's diversity has been described as a source of weakness. | <input type="checkbox"/> |

E. Answer in one word or one phrase :

1. Who coined the phrase 'Unity in Diversity' ?
2. Name two geographical features of Kerala.
3. Name one cultural feature of Ladakh.
4. Which agricultural crops are grown in Kerala ?
5. What animal product is Ladakh famous for ?

F. Answer these questions briefly :

1. What are the three kinds of inequalities ?
2. How is Kerala culturally diverse ?
3. What are the factors that affect diversity ?
4. How do the historical events influence the culture of a community ?
5. How does climate influence the food habits of a community ?
6. Comment, 'Every social difference does not lead to social division'.
7. Write a note on 'Interaction between diverse cultures'.
8. Write a note on 'Variety or diversity is the spice of life'.

G. Answer these questions in detail :

1. What are the origins of social differences ?
2. Compare the geographical and historical influence on the lifestyles of Ladakh and Kerala ?

PROJECT WORK

1. List the different festivals celebrated in your locality. Which of these celebrations are shared by members of different regional and religious communities ?
2. List the languages spoken by your classmates. Learn a song in any Indian language other than your mother tongue.