



Unity in diversity

Differences

Lifestyle is the way a person or group of people live, including the place they live in, the things they own, the kind of job they do and the activities they enjoy. Lifestyle is influenced by the geography and history of the place where someone lives. Our way of living also includes what we eat, wear, the games we play, the occasions we celebrate, and, of course, the languages we speak. India has more than 1600 dialects of 22 main (national) languages that are people's mother tongues. It has more than a hundred dance forms and eight major religions of the world. Thus there is a wide variety or diversity in the lifestyles of the individuals and groups of people. But this diversity is not accepted or respected by all though our Constitution does.

Prejudice

People do not always feel comfortable with other people who talk in a different language or belong to another region or religion. They feel more secure with people who are like them rather than those who are different. They make friends with those who think like them and like the same things that they do. They form certain opinions about those who are not like them. For example, a villager may often see city people as money-minded, cunning and lazy. A city-dweller may often regard villagers as dirty, ignorant and superstitious.

Prejudices mean having always negative opinions about certain people or seeing them inferior without knowing much about them. People often pre-judge unreasonably about other people of different race, gender or religion. Prejudice is thus an unreasonable dislike and distrust of people who are different in some way. So, they give unfair or unreasonable opinion about a diverse group. When we think that only one particular way is the best and right way to do things, we often end up not respecting others who may prefer to do things differently. Sometimes even a different accent of the language they speak is not respected. Often, the prejudices about others are so strong that people



do not form friendships with them. At times, they even tease, laugh at or ban different individuals or group to take part in an activity.

Thus, prejudices affect relationships and may hurt sentiments of other people and even add to tensions.

Creating Stereotypes

When we fix people into one image we create a stereotype.

Stereotype is an unfair decision, belief or idea that a type of person has particular qualities or abilities because they belong to a particular race, gender or social class. When people say that those who belong to a particular region, religion, gender, race or economic background are “money-minded”, “lazy”, “criminal” or “dumb”, they are creating stereotypes. There are some money-minded and generous people everywhere, in every region, in every group whether rich or poor, men or women. And just because some people are like that, it is not fair to think that everyone of the group will be the same. Stereotyping fits large numbers of people into only one pattern or type.

Stereotypes affect all of us as they prevent us from doing certain things, that we might otherwise be good at. For example, in India, it is often said, “You are a boy, cooking is not your job,” or “You are a girl, horse-riding is not your job.” If a boy cooks, then he feels that others will either tease him or laugh at him. So he stops himself from cooking even in an emergency, at least in front of others. “This is the way boys are and this is how girls are,” these are statements we hear constantly in the society and have to accept without even thinking, and we start believing that each one of us must behave accordingly. The society fits all boys and all girls into an image created by it around us.

Here are some qualities given below. Are some of them that boys are born with and some that are girls born with ? In the first attempt you will fix a quality with boys or girls. These are the stereotypes created by society and which you have grown with. Fill in the blanks with Boys or Girls and rethink.

1. _____ are well behaved.
2. _____ are physically strong.
3. _____ are naughty.
4. _____ are soft spoken.
5. _____ make a very tasty dessert.
6. _____ fought with the others on the main road.
7. _____ helped their mother at home.
8. _____ are good at sports.
9. _____ are good at dance and painting.
10. _____ do not cry.
11. _____ are emotional.
12. _____ keep the house clean.
13. _____ drive very fast.

A Common Stereotype

A common stereotype about some communities is that they are not interested in educating girls and therefore do not send girls to schools. But this is not a fact. At most places poverty continues to be the root cause of illiteracy and not religion that keeps the children away from school, especially the girl child. Most communities, even poor have begun to show interest in sending their girl child to school. Now most teachers are women in urban and rural areas. At most places the distances between the school and home is not much.

The children go to school walking. The grown up adolescents go to higher schools and colleges on bicycles or other public vehicles.

Stereotypes about Children with Special Needs

People, at times, are unkind and even ruthless to create stereotypes about the 'disabled' children and tease them. Now the social service groups have changed the term 'disabled' and the new term used is 'children with special needs'. This is done to help them think positively and creatively instead of reminding them of their weakness by saying 'disabled' every time. But some prejudiced people think that the mind of these 'children with special needs' is weak and unbalanced as their limbs are weak, shaking and unable to keep balance. But they forget that the prominent scientist Stephen Hawking with many special needs is famous worldwide for his research and lectures in wheel chair.



Girls studying in a rural school



A child with special need painting on canvas

I am Creative and Happy

I limp, I lisp, all this and more,
Sometimes I feel so sad and sore.
Folks make fun, it's nothing new,
If you were I, what would you do ?
But I laugh and move my limbs,
I do all my work and create paintings.

Inequality and Discrimination

Economic differences are not a form of diversity of culture but of inequality. People who are poor do not have the resources or the money to meet their basic needs of food, clothing and shelter. However, discrimination takes place not because of diversity or inequality. Discrimination happens where people act on their prejudices or stereotypes.

Discrimination is doing something to stop someone from living in certain neighbourhoods, taking up jobs, from taking water from the same well or hand pump or taking part in certain activities.

Groups of people who may speak a certain language, follow a particular religion, live in specific regions etc. may be discriminated against as their customs or practices may be seen as inferior. Tribals, some religious groups and even particular regions are discriminated against

for one or more reasons. This was how large numbers of people were discriminated in the name of caste. Certain kinds of work were valued more than others. Activities like cleaning, washing, etc. are seen as dirty or impure and of lower value. Some groups were forced to pick garbage and remove dead animals from the village. They were weak, poor and helpless. They were thus oppressed.

Striving for Equality

Large groups of people : Dalits, women, tribals and peasants not only fought against the British but also fought against the inequalities they experienced in their lives. When India became a free nation, the **Constitution of India** was written. It was a document that laid out the rules by which the nation would function. Our leaders were aware of the ways in which discrimination had been practised in Indian society. They were concerned about the different kinds of inequalities that existed. So, these leaders set out a vision and goals in the Constitution that all the people of India were treated equally. The writers of the Constitution also said that **respect for diversity** was a significant element in ensuring equality. This equality of all persons is seen as a key value that unites us all as Indians. This is seen as an important element of our unity that we all live together and respect one another. But equality is a value that we have to keep striving for and not something which will happen automatically. People's struggles and positive actions by the government are necessary to make this a reality for all Indians.



Women at a rally demanding their rights

Key Features of our Constitution

1. Everyone has equal rights and opportunities.
2. People are free to choose the kind of work they wish to do.
3. Government jobs are open to all people.
4. Untouchability is a crime.
5. People have the freedom to practise and follow their religion, speak their language and celebrate their festivals.
6. The government will be secular, that is, treat all religions equally. The Constitution also placed responsibility on the government to take **specific steps** to realise this right to equality for poor and other such marginal communities.

Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar (1891–1956) fought for the right of the Dalits. He encouraged Dalits to send their children to school and college. Dr. Ambedkar was the Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Constitution. Later, as Law Minister in the Union Cabinet, he did much for the upliftment of the so-called untouchables.

THE CONSTITUTION OF INDIA

PREAMBLE

We, The People Of India, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a **Sovereign Socialist Secular Democratic Republic** and to secure to all its citizens :

Justice, social, economic and political;

Liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship;

Equality of status and of opportunity; and to promote among them all

Fraternity assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the Nation;

In Our Constituent Assembly this twenty-sixth day of November, 1949, do **Hereby Adopt, Enact And Give To Ourselves This Constitution.**

The preamble of the Constitution of India



Dr. B.R. Ambedkar

Our Rights

First of all every citizen aged eighteen years or more has the right to vote at elections. He/She can vote freely in order to elect the representative of his/her choice. Any citizen who is aged 25 years or above has the right to be a candidate for election. The right of vote is for adults only. But there are other rights of every citizen of India even children. They are called Fundamental Rights.

1. **Right to Equality** : All people are equal before the law whatever their caste, religion, gender or birth in any place of India are.
2. **Right to Freedom** : All people can express their views. They can assemble or form associations. They are free to live and travel anywhere in India. They can follow any profession.
3. **Right against Exploitation** : No one can be forced to work for others. Children below the age of 14 cannot be employed as labourers.
4. **Right to Freedom of Religion** : Everyone is free to follow and preach the religion of her/his choice. She/He can freely observe her/his customs and festivals.



5. **Cultural and Educational Rights** : All Indians will have the right to preserve their distinct language or script. A student will not be refused admission to any institution on the grounds of religion, caste or language.
6. **Right to Constitutional Remedies** : Every citizen can seek protection from the court if his fundamental right is interfered by anyone.

In order to enjoy our rights we must ensure that we are not interfering with the rights of others. The rights of one person are the duties of another. For example, we are free to speak but we should not speak anything hurting others. It is also our duty to let others speak.



Key Words

- » Life-style : the way a person or group of people live, including the place they live in, the things they own, the kind of job they do and the activities they enjoy.
- » Prejudice : having always negative opinions about certain people or seeing them inferior without knowing much about them.
- » Stereotype : an unfair decision, belief or idea that a type of person has particular qualities or abilities because they belong to a particular race, gender or social class.
- » Discrimination : doing something to stop someone from living in certain neighbourhoods, taking up jobs, from taking water from the same well or hand pump or taking part in certain activities.
- » Constitution of India : a document that laid out the rules by which the nation would function.

SUMMARY

- ▶ Lifestyle is influenced by the geography and history of the place where someone lives.
- ▶ There is a wide diversity in the lifestyles of the individuals and groups of people. But this diversity is not respected by all.
- ▶ Prejudice is an unreasonable dislike and distrust of people who are different in some way.
- ▶ Stereotype is an unfair decision, belief or idea that a type of person has particular qualities or abilities because they belong to a particular race, gender or social class.
- ▶ Stereotyping fits large number of people into only one pattern or type.
- ▶ Stereotypes affect all of us as they prevent us from doing certain things that we might otherwise be good at.
- ▶ People, at times, are unkind and even ruthless to create stereotypes about the 'disabled children' and tease them.
- ▶ Discrimination happens where people act on their prejudices or stereotypes.
- ▶ Our Constitution said that respect for diversity was a significant element in ensuring equality.
- ▶ According to our Constitution everyone has equal rights and opportunities.


Exercise Time

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

1. India has more than 1600 dialects of _____ main languages.
 - a. twenty six
 - b. twenty four
 - c. twenty two
 - d. twenty
2. It means having always negative opinions about certain people or seeing them inferior without knowing them _____.
 - a. Prejudices
 - b. Lifestyle
 - c. Thinking
 - d. Religions
3. Economic differences are not a form of diversity of culture but of _____.
 - a. equality
 - b. inequality
 - c. Discrimination
 - d. Diversity
4. The right of vote is for _____ only .
 - a. children
 - b. adults
 - c. old people
 - d. infants
5. It happens where people act on their prejudices or stereotypes _____.
 - a. Lifestyle
 - b. Stereotype
 - c. Problem
 - d. Discrimination

B. Fill in the blanks :

1. Prejudice means to pre-judge other people _____.
2. The work of cleaning, washing, etc are thought to be of _____ value.

- 
3. _____ is influenced by the geography and history of the place where someone lives.
 4. _____ fought for the rights of the Dalits.
 5. Prejudice hurts the _____ of other people.

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

1. Dr. Ambedkar was the chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Constitution.
2. Discrimination happens when people act on their prejudices or stereotypes.
3. India has only two religions practised by its people.
4. Stereotypes help us doing certain things.
5. Root cause of illiteracy in India is poverty.

D. Define the terms :

1. Prejudice
2. Stereotype
3. Discrimination

E. Answer in one word or one phrase :

1. How many religions are practised by Indian people ?
2. What is the root cause of illiteracy in India ?
3. Who was the chairman of the drafting committee of the Constitution ?
4. How many dialects of languages are spoken in India ?
5. Which kind of work is seen as of lower value ?

F. Answer these questions briefly :

1. What do you mean by prejudice ?
2. How people create a stereotype ?
3. What is discrimination ? How is it caused ?
4. Write short note on the effects of prejudice.
5. How are we affected by stereotypes ?
6. What does the Constitution say with regard to equality ?
7. Why is it important for all people to be equal ?
8. How does our Constitution ensure equality of all people ?

G. Answer these questions in detail :

1. What is prejudice ? Why is it caused ? How does it harm people ?
2. What is stereotype ? How and why is it created ? How is it harmful to society ?
3. What is discrimination ? How is it caused ? How has our Constitution tried to prevent discrimination ?

PROJECT WORK

- How can the stereotype that girls are a burden on their parents affect the life of a daughter. Imagine this situation and discuss with classmates. List at least five different effects that this stereotype can have on the way daughters get treated in the house.