



Diversity in Our Society

In the earlier chapters we saw how the land on which we live is so varied and that the life of people is so diverse. Diversity is present not only between different places but within your own classroom and locality!

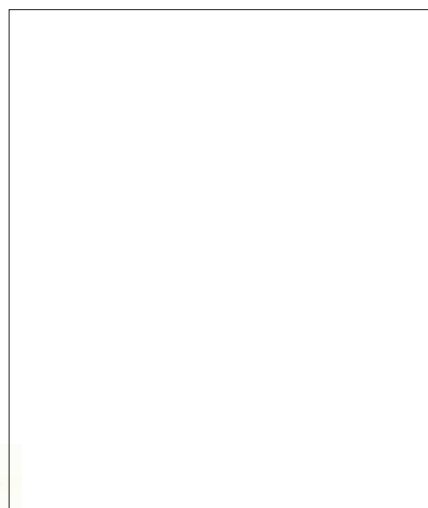
Diversity in our neighbourhood

Look around yourself in the classroom. Do you see anyone who looks exactly like you? In this chapter, you will learn that people are different from each other in many ways. Not only do they look different but they might also be long to different regional, cultural or religious backgrounds. These differences enrich our lives in many ways and also make them more fun!

All these people with different backgrounds, religions and cultures help to make India so interesting and so diverse. What does diversity add to our lives? How did India become so diverse? Are all kinds

of differences a part of diversity? Read this chapter to find answers to some of these questions.

Look at these pictures. Three children of your age have drawn these figures. Use the empty space to draw a human figure.



Is your drawing similar to any of the others? The chances are that your drawing is quite different from the other three. This is because each of us is unique and also has one's own drawing style.

Fill up the following information about yourself:

1. When I go out, I like wearing
2. At home, I speak in language.
3. My favourite sport is
4. I like reading books.

Now, with the help of your teacher, find out how many of you have similar answers. Is there anyone whose list matches yours exactly? Probably not. But many of you may have similar answers. Discuss them. Forexample, how many like reading the same kind of books? How many languages are spoken in your neighbourhood? Through this exercise you might have recognised the many ways in which you are quite like some of your class mates and the other ways in which you are different from them.

Making friends

Do you think it would be easy for you to make friends with someone who is very different from you? Read the following story:

Suman's mother runs a vegetable shop on the busy crossing in Vikarabad. Suman assists his mother in the shop and is called 'Vegetable Suman' by everyone.

One day, a boy of his age came riding a cycle and stopped at the shop. Vegetable Suman asked 'Kya chahiye?' The boy who was in school uniform said 'Lady's fingers half kg.' 'Boleto bhendi adha kilo?' Vegetable Suman said. The boy nodded. He took the vegetables, paid money and went away on his cycle.



Fig. 15.1: Suman at vegetable shop

The next day, the school boy came to the vegetable shop again. Vegetable Suman smiled at him and said, 'Bhappayachahiye?' The school boy smiled in reply and asked, 'What vegetables do you have?' 'Kaddu, Turai, Bhendi, Tamatar, Alu, pyaz..', said Vegetable Suman. The school boy asked him, 'Don't you know Telugu? Where are you from?' 'Hum Bihar kehain. Mere gharmae Hindi boltaehaina. I know Telugu thoda, thoda,' replied the boy. The school boy asked him 'What is your name?' Vegetable Suman said, 'My name is Suman. They call me Vegetable Suman!' 'Oh! My name is also Suman', said the school boy and shook Suman's hand. Both of them became friends after this.

On Sundays, when the boys would play cricket, student Suman would invite vegetable Suman to play with them. Vegetable Suman was a very good fielder. He would joke that he practiced by not letting the vegetables fall or roll on the ground!

Some weeks later, when student Suman met vegetable Suman he found the shopkeeper very upset. 'What happened?' he asked. 'The municipality people are asking us to vacate this place saying that this is an encroachment. They are asking us to go to the big market. We are too poor to pay the high rents there. I don't know where we will go now !, said vegetable Suman. Student Suman went back home worried. He wondered how he could help his friend. Two days later, when he went to the same place to buy vegetables, he could not find the shop there. He was told that the municipality had cleared the place of all encroachments. Student Suman felt very sad.

Both Sumans have many differences between them in terms of their mother tongue, the states they come from, the work they do and the opportunities they have. Yet they could become friends.

- Can you list the differences between the two?
- Find out about the festivals and food of the people of Bihar (or any another state).
- What kind of food would student Suman eat? What festivals would he celebrate?

- What kind of a house would they be living in?
- You would have noticed that there are other kinds of differences between the two. Vegetable Suman did not go to school but sold vegetables. Why do you think was he not able to go to school?
- If he wanted to go to school, what problems would he face?

Diversity in India

We live in a country in which people of different abilities, languages, cultures, religions etc. live together. Such diversity makes life richer and varied. There are 29 states in India, each has its own language, culture, food etc. Even within one state, we can see people speaking many different languages, following different religions, eating different kinds of food, observing different kinds of festivals, and wearing different kinds of dresses. The interesting thing is that slowly people adopt each other's dresses, food, festivals, language and even religious ideas. This makes everyone's life richer and more diverse. You could probably give many examples of this from your own neighbourhood.

- List all the food items you eat but your grandparents would not have known.

Items	Where did they come from?
Food:	
Dress:	
Games:	
Festivals:	

Now, we will read about how this kind of diversity comes about with the help of examples from distant states.

In our own state of Telangana we can see vast diversity among the people. This text book is also published in nearly seven languages that are spoken in our state. In addition, there are several tribal communities who speak their own languages and lead a distinct way of life. Many nomadic tribes like the Lambadas and Banjaras also live in different parts of the state. During the time of the Golkonda Sultans and Nizams, people from as far away as Samarkand, Bokhara, Iran and Turkey have come and settled in Hyderabad, Secunderabad and other parts of the state. A large number slaves of African origin were brought to Hyderabad. Some colonies like Habsiguda in Hyderabad have been named after them. By intermixing with other people, all these diverse people have created a distinct and diverse culture of Telangana. Thus, Telangana has its own variety of Telugu, Hindi and Urdu (called Dakhni) which are distinct from those languages spoken in other parts of the country. Hyderabad has been a major centre of both Telugu and Urdu poetry. Such diversity of people has resulted in a rich cultural tradition which includes many religions, different festivals, traditions and cultures, dress patterns, diverse food, many kinds of architecture, building styles, etc.

How does diversity come about?

At all times in history, people went in search of new lands and settled in new places. Sometimes, they went for trade or

to conquer and settle in new places. Some other times they left their homes due to floods, droughts, epidemics, wars and conflicts etc. They brought their languages, religions and cultures to the new place and tried to follow them in the new place also. Gradually, they mixed up with the people of those areas, adopted many of their things and also taught many of their own things to them. In the following section, we will see how the life of people in different places evolves with diversity.

- Look at a map of India showing states and union territories in chapter 12 and locate Telangana, Rajasthan and Sikkim.

Thar Desert

Thar Desert is situated on the border of India and Pakistan. A large part of it is in the Marwar region of Rajasthan state. This place receives very little rainfall and there are no large rivers flowing. As a result, very few trees grow here and very few crops can be cultivated. Only grass grows here. People here mainly depend upon grazing sheep, goats and camels. The shepherds usually travel across many states with their herds and usually come back before the rainy season to Thar.



Fig. 15.2: Thar desert

Many traders travelling to and from Iran and Afghanistan pass through this desert. They stop over at convenient places to rest. Many pilgrims going to Dwarka in Gujarat or to Mecca and Madina in Arabia or to Ajmer and Pushkar lake would pass through this area along with the traders. Over a period of time, these places have grown into important towns and cities like Jaisalmer, Bikaner and Jodhpur. Thus, over centuries, people of many religions like Bohra Muslims, Sunni Muslims, Shia Muslims, Jains, Shaivas, Vaishnavas and Sikhs settled down in these towns and cities. Similarly, many Marwari traders from these parts went all over India and settled in several places.

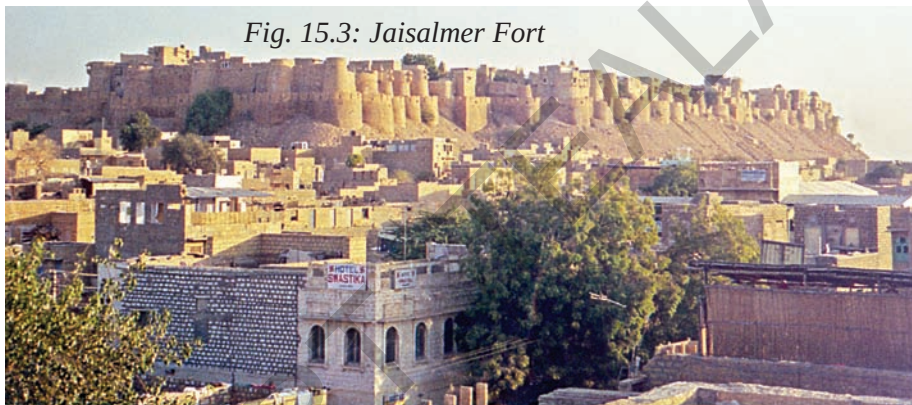


Fig. 15.3: Jaisalmer Fort

Many kings from different parts of the subcontinent, established kingdoms in these parts. All these people together developed complex systems for harvesting rain water and cultivating desert soil. Thus Thar became the most thickly populated desert in the world.

Earlier people mainly ate rotis made of bajra with green gram or black gram and ate vegetables that grew on some trees (Sangri) and thorny bushes. These were dried and eaten throughout the year. Today however, you can get all kinds of food from idly-sambar to pizza and ice-creams.

The cattle of this region give very good milk and excellent sweets are made from them. Bikaner, a city of the Thar Desert is very famous for both its sweets and savouries.

All the people who came to Thar brought new crafts, new styles of dressing and new kinds of food. Today, thousands of tourists from all over the world come to enjoy the diversity of the Thar Desert.

Sikkim

Sikkim is a small state situated in the eastern parts of the Himalayan Mountains. Kanchenjunga, one of the highest peaks of the Himalayas, is in Sikkim. It remains cold throughout the year and the place is covered with snow in winter. It also rains heavily in monsoon and many rivers flow through the valleys.

Sikkim is situated on the boundary between India, Nepal, Bhutan and Tibet (China). That is why people from all these areas have settled down here. Some are Nepalese, some are Tibetans and



Fig. 15.4: Rumtek Monastery

Bhutanese. As many as eleven languages are spoken by the people of Sikkim! They have a close relationship with Tibetan Lamas who brought Buddhism to this area. They also established many beautiful monasteries in Sikkim.



Fig. 15.5: Kanchenjunga

Sikkim was an independent country till 1975 ruled by the kings called Chogyals. That year, Sikkim became a part of India and a democratic government was established.

Both Thar and Sikkim are in India. Thar is in the desert region, whereas Sikkim is in the Himalayas. The influence of diverse cultures is not merely a thing of the past. Our present lives are about moving from place to place for work. With each move, our cultural traditions and way of life slowly become part of the new place we are in. Similarly, in our neighbourhood, we live among people from several different communities. Our daily lives are about the ways in which we do things together and customs and traditions become part of our life process.

Pondicherry

Pondicherry is a tiny state in the South Eastern coast of India. Pondicherry attracted a number of European trading companies like the Dutch, Portuguese,

English and the French. They established trading posts and also small colonies of their people. Over time the French acquired control over the place and held it till 1954 when the people of Pondicherry voted to join the Indian Union. Pondicherry thus has a large number of French speaking people besides Tamils and others. During the freedom movement in India against the British, Pondicherry offered refuge to many freedom fighters like Subramania Bharati, the great nationalist poet of Tamil Nadu and Aurobindo Ghosh, who was initially, a revolutionary nationalist from Bengal and eventually became an important spiritual master of modern India. A large number of devotees from all over India came to settle down here. Aurobindo Ghosh and his French disciple, the Mother established Aurobindo Ashram. Subsequently an international village, named as 'Auroville' was established with the backing of the United Nations to spread the message of peace and global cooperation. Pondicherry, thus, offers an example of a place where not only diverse cultures of India merged, but also where people of the whole world come together to celebrate oneness of humanity.



Fig. 15.6: Auroville Matri Mandir

Unity in Diversity

Over the past centuries India emerged as a country with shared cultures, religions, political systems etc. along with the diversity. This history of diversity and integration helped Indian people to come together as a nation to fight the British Rule. This common struggle is called the 'National Movement'.

*Don't forget the days of blood, O friend
In the midst of your happiness remember
to shed a tear for us
The hunter has torn away every single flower
Do plant a flower in the desert garden
dear friend
Having fallen to bullets we slept in
Jallianwalla Bagh
Do light a lamp on this lonely grave O friend
The blood of Hindus and Muslims flows
together today
Do soak your robe in this river of blood
dear friend
Some rot in jails while others lie in their
graves
Do shed a few tears for them O friend.*

Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA)

This song was sung after the JallianwallaBagh massacre in Amritsar in which a British general opened fire on a large group of unarmed, peaceful people killing many and wounding even more. Men and women, Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims, rich and poor had gathered to protest against the massacre of the British. This song was composed and sung to honour the memory of those brave people.

Songs and symbols that emerged during the freedom struggle serve as a constant reminder of our country's rich tradition of respect for diversity. Do you know the story of the Indian flag? It was used as a symbol of protest against the British by people everywhere.

In his book, *The Discovery of India* Jawaharlal Nehru says 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." It was Nehru, who coined the phrase "unity in diversity" to describe the country.

- India's national anthem, composed by Rabindranath Tagore, is another expression of the unity of India. In what way does the national anthem describe this unity?



Fig. 15.7: The first Prime Minister of India Jawaharlal Nehru addressing the nation on Independence day from the Red Fort.

Keywords

Diversity
Culture
Patriotic

Colonial
Lama

Improve your learning

1. Give two examples that reveal the diversity in your neighbourhood.
2. Prepare a table of similar items of different religions which depict unity.
3. How do you say that national sports meet develops unity in diversity?
4. Prepare a list of festivals that are celebrated in your locality. Which of them are shared by members of different regional and religious communities?
5. In what ways does living in India with its rich heritage of diversity add to your life?
6. Collect pictures and contributions of freedom fighters of different regions and prepare a book containing their biographies.
7. Design a pamphlet giving illustrations that depict the unique feature of India's Unity in diversity.
8. Fill in the following table:



S.No	Item	Myself	Friend (Male)	Friend (Female)
1	Food			
2	Dress			
3	House			
4	Mother Tongue			
5	Religion			
6	Festivals			
7	Any other			

Do you consider the differences in the above items as obstacles to continue your friendship? Justify.

9. Locate the following in India map.

a) Thar desert
b) Sikkim
c) Pondicherry

d) Kerala
e) Telangana
f) Punjab
10. 'How does diversity come about?' Answer this question based on what you have learnt about the Thar, Sikkim and Pondicherry.