



The state of being different, of being unique, is known as diversity. Diversity includes such factors as age, gender, race, religion, education, occupation and food. Diversity does not mean that each of us does different things all the time. Very often we might be doing the same thing, but we just do it differently. The presence of a wide range of features in any sphere is called diversity.

Samir Ek is a Hindu, Samir Do is a Muslim. In addition to their diverse religious and cultural backgrounds, there are other ways in which Samir Ek and Samir Do are different from each other. For example, while Samir Ek goes to school, Samir Do sells newspaper. Samir Do did not have the opportunity to attend school. Perhaps you've noticed that there are several people in the area where you live who are poor and who don't have enough to eat or wear and sometimes not even a place to live.

This difference is not the same as the one we have seen earlier. Here, we're talking not of difference but of inequality. **Inequality** comes about when a person does not have the resources and opportunities that are available to other persons.

The caste system is another example of inequality. According to this, society was divided into different groups depending upon the work that people did and they were supposed to remain in those groups. So if your parents were potter, you could only become a potter, nothing else. This system was considered irreversible.

And because we were not supposed to change our profession, it was not considered necessary for us to know anything more than what we needed in our profession. This created a situation of inequality. We will read more about this and other inequalities later on.

Just like **Samir Ek and Samir Do** became friends. You might have friends who are very different from you. You have probably eaten different kinds of food in their homes, celebrated different festivals with them, tried out the clothes they wear, and learnt some of their languages as well.

Need for diversity

Diversity brings variety in our lives and provides us with varied opportunities. A society grows when people are engaged in various occupations. They learn various skills as per their interests and work towards the enhancement of society. Humans with diverse interests and skills are a necessity for society.

Diversity and Interdependence

Within a social group, individuals perform various activities depending upon their skills and interests. In this way, the work is shared by everyone without disturbing the social group.

In a family, different members perform different jobs. You must have seen in your family how different members take up different jobs and allow the family to function smoothly as a single unit.

In a village community the farmer produces food for the entire community; the weaver makes clothes; the mason builds houses for all and so on. In this way, a community becomes an independent unit with the contribution of diverse members. Communities also depend upon other communities for their various needs. The communities in towns and cities depend upon the village community to supply them food and at the same time, the village community depends upon the towns and cities for factory-made goods, tractors, pumps, etc.

A nation depends upon its different states to work in harmony while retaining their individuality. In a country as diverse as India, this has proved to be an advantage and helped economic growth of the country. In recent times, the whole world has become one big global family. Though each nation has diverse interests, they all work towards a better future.

Diversity in India:



6th – Democratic Politics - Understanding Diversity I



India is a country of much diversity. We speak different languages, have various types of food, celebrate different festivals, and practice different religions. The diversity in India is not only evident in people's lives but also in the country's geographical and climatic conditions. Different types of Landforms like mountain plains, plateaus, deserts and coastal areas are found in India.

How do we explain diversity?

A little more than two hundred years ago or long before the train, aero plane, bus or car became a part of our lives, people travelled from one part of the world to another, in ships, on horses, on camels or on foot.

Often, they went in search of new lands, or new places to settle in, or for people to trade with. And because it took so long to travel, once they got to a place, people stayed there, often for a long time. Many others left their homes because there were famines and drought and they could not get enough to eat. Some went in search of work while others left because there was a war. Sometimes, as they began to make their homes in new places, people began to change a little and at other times they managed to do things in the old ways. So their languages, food, music, religions became a mix of the old and the new, and out of this intermixing of cultures, came something new and different.

The history of many places shows us how many different cultural influences have helped to shape life and culture there, thus, regions became very diverse because of their unique histories.

Similarly diversity also comes about when people adapt their lives to the geographical area in which they live. For example living near the sea is quite different from living in a mountainous area.

Not only do people have different clothing and eating habits, but even the kinds of work they do are different. In cities it is often easy to forget how closely people's lives are tied to their physical surroundings. This is because in the city people seldom grow their own vegetables and grain. Instead they depend on the market to buy all the food and other goods that they need.

Historical and geographical factors influence the diversity of a region.....

Ladakh is a desert in the mountains in the eastern part of Jammu and Kashmir. Very little agriculture is possible here since this region does not receive any rain and is covered in snow for a large part of the year. There are very few trees that can grow in the region. For drinking water, people depend on the melting snow during the summer months.

Kerala is a state in the south-west corner of India. It is surrounded by the sea on one side and hills on the other. A number of spices like pepper, cloves and cardamoms are grown on the hills. It is spices that made this region an attractive place for traders, Jewish and Arab traders were the first to come here.

While Kerala and Ladakh are quite different in terms of their geographical features, the history of both regions has seen similar cultural influences. Both regions were influenced by Chinese and Arab traders. It was the geography of Kerala which allowed for the cultivation of spices and the special geographical location of Ladakh and its wool that drew traders to these regions. Thus history and geography are often tied in the cultural life of a region.

The influence of diverse cultures is not merely a thing of the past. Our present 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 neighborhoods we live close to people from several communities. Our daily lives are about the ways in which we do things together and hear stories about each other's lives, customs and traditions.

