

## 3. Diversity and Unity in Indian Society

### 3.1 Diversity in Indian Society

### 3.2 Unity in Diversity

### 3.3 Challenges to National Unity

#### INTRODUCTION

India is a land of “Unity in diversity”. In light of this statement we will discuss in this unit, aspects and indicators regarding diversity and unity in Indian society, together with the challenges posed for national integration. The sources of diversity in India may be traced through a variety of ways, the most obvious being the ethnic origins, religions, castes, tribes, languages, social customs, cultural and sub-cultural beliefs, political philosophies and ideologies, geographical variations etc. Despite this, one feature that is most often noticed about India is its unity in diversity. Unity implies oneness or a sense of ‘we-feeling’; it holds tightly together various relationships and belief systems of diverse ethnic communities or institutions into some form of acceptable unity, through bonds of contrived structures, norms and values. The phrase “Unity in diversity” refers to the state of togetherness or oneness in spite of immense diversity. “Unity in diversity” is based on the concept where the individual or social differences in physical attributes, caste, gender, creed, cultural and religious practices, etc. are not looked upon as conflicting. In this unit, we shall also examine how the dynamics of racial, religious, linguistic, regional, caste, class and gender differences generate forces that question this oneness.

### 3.1 DIVERSITY IN INDIAN SOCIETY

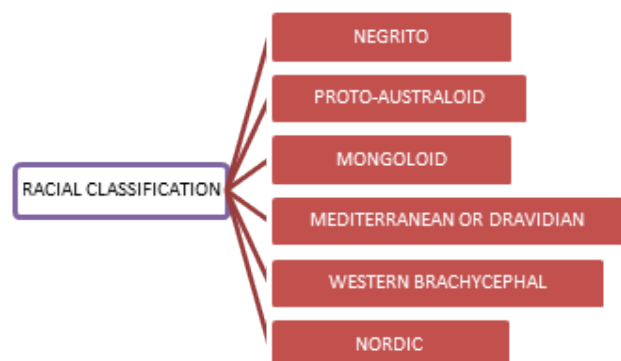
Indian society is a land of various types of diversity. The dictionary defines ‘diversity’,

as variety or different. We will discuss in this part about the most powerful sources of diversity i.e. race, religion, language, region, caste, class and gender in Indian society.



#### Equality

**Racial Diversity :** A simplistic definition of race could be that it is a group of people with a set of distinctive physical features. A.W. Green says, “A race is a large biological human grouping with a number of distinctive, inherited characteristics which vary within a certain range.” Racial classifications are made on the basis of certain genetic traits. Such types of traits used in classification of races are referred to as racial criteria. It is a difficult task to construct a systematic ethnography of the teeming millions of Indian population. However, several anthropologists like J.H. Hutton, D.N. Majumdar and B. S. Guha have given racial classifications of Indian people. Let us look at the classification given by - B.S. Guha. He classifies the population of India into six main racial groups, as follows:



It is observed by scholars now, that there are no pure racial types across the world, rather there are mixed types of the archetypal racial groups. Migrations across time and space have ensured that there occurred a lot of intermixture of these races and this resulted in enormous racial heterogeneity among the people of India. Thus even though there are racial classifications of human beings, at present, the basis for identifying differences is no longer limited to external physical attributes. The use of scientific technology has enabled the study of physical qualities through genetic studies and DNA testing, which have greater validity and reliability.

**Religious Diversity :** The institution of religion is universal. It is found in all societies - past and present. Religious dogmas have influenced and conditioned economic endeavours, political movements, social hierarchies, and cultural differences. Religion is one of the key facts of diversity in Indian society. Although India is a multi-religious and multi-cultural country, the secular mandate informed by the Constitution of India ensures that the secular fabric of society is maintained. It is a land where tribal beliefs of animism and naturism, and religions like Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism, have originated and flourished. Later there has been the influence of Christianity, Islam, Zoroastrianism and Sikhism. The basic ideas and faith of each religion may differ, but they continue to coexist in Indian society.

The Right to Freedom of Religion is also declared as a Fundamental Right by the Indian Constitution. Indian religions have exerted significant influence all over the world. Each major religion is sub-divided along the lines of religious doctrines, sects, and cults. In the next column is a table showing the distribution of religious groups in India based on religious identity.

Religious group	Population % (2011 Census)
Hindus	79.80
Muslims	14.23
Christians	02.30
Sikhs	01.72
Buddhists	0.70
Jains	0.37
Parsi	0.06
There are only 4650 Jews in India.	

We cannot assume that all members of a faith are unanimous with regard to their beliefs and practices. There are various interpretations of sacred literature and ethnocentric positions on the part of many sub-groups within. Religion tends to bring together people of the faith to celebrate commonly cherished festivals and events. These festivities have brought together people of differing faiths to celebrate festivals like Ganapati, Diwali, Ramzan Eid, Pateti, Christmas and so on. Also, the Government of India through its declaration of public holidays for various religious festivals of significance, enable people of various faiths to mark the occasion. For example, Good Friday, Ram Navami, Eid-ul-Fitr etc. For example, in Kolkata the festival of lights (Diwali) is celebrated along with the Jewish



Religious Diversity

Festival of Lights (Hannukah).

### Activity 1

Form groups of 5-7 students. Identify a specific religion. Interview 5 people of the specific religion chosen by you and find out about their religious customs and traditions. Write a report and present your findings in your class.

**Linguistic Diversity :** Multilingualism is a way of life in India. In 1956, Indian States were organised on a linguistic basis. Hence, domiciles of a particular State speak a particular language. India is a land of many languages.

The Constitution of India has approved of 22 official languages. Among these, three languages have been recognised as classical languages viz. Sanskrit, Tamil and Kannada. All three have been given a special status and recognition by the Government of India. These classical languages have a written and oral history of over 1000 years.

The Language Policy of India guarantees

protection to linguistic minorities. A unique feature of India is the concept of protecting the interest of children to get basic education in their mother tongues (i.e. home language).

21<sup>st</sup> February 2017 was declared as an International Mother Language Day by the United Nations. Long before this, the founders of the Constitution of India had already given top priority to teaching in the mother-tongue thus enabling the child to develop its full potential. The language policy of India is pluralistic and it gives priority to the use of mother-tongue in administration, education and other fields of mass communication. To implement and monitor this policy, the Government has set up 'The Language Bureau' under the Ministry of Human Resource Development.

Today, linguistic diversity needs to be preserved. Speakers of diverse languages are becoming rare and the major languages are being adopted after abandoning the 'mother-tongue'.

Community participation is required to conserve language diversity which is a major part of the cultural wealth of India.

### Classification of Language Family in India

Indo-Aryan (Arya)	Dravidian (Dravida)	Austro - Asiatic (Nishada)	Sino – Tibetan (Kirata)	Andamanese
Sanskrit, Kashmiri, Hindi, Bengali, Punjabi, Rajasthani, Gujarati, Sindhi, Kutchi, Marathi, Oriya, Assamese, Urdu, Konkani, Bihari, Avadhi, Chhattisgarhi, Bugheli, Alawari.	Telugu, Kurukh, Oraon, Maler, Kui, Parji, Kolami, Tamil, Malayalam, Kannada, Tulu, Kota, Coorgi, Toda.	Munda [comprised of 14 languages e.g. Mundari, Santhali, Ho, etc.] Mon – Khmer [has 2 sub – groups viz. Khasi, Nicobari.	Has 3 sub – divisions viz. Tibeto- Himalayan, Himalayan languages, Bhutia Languages	Spoken by tribal people of the Andaman Islands viz. Aka – Jeru, Ongan and Sentinelese

### 2011 Census: Total Speakers as a percentage of the total population

Language	% of Speakers
Hindi	57.1
English	10.6
Bengali	8.9
Marathi	8.2
Telugu	7.8
Tamil	6.3
Gujarati	5.0
Urdu	5.2
Kannada	4.94
Odia	3.56
Punjabi	3.02
Malayalam	2.9
Sanskrit	0.01

#### You should know!

As a part of linguistic diversity, the Prasar Bharati of All India Radio has to broadcast in twenty-three languages and 179 dialects.

#### Activity 2

Make groups of 5 students. Identify one State in India and the languages and dialects spoken in it. If possible make audio recordings of some languages and dialects. Share with your class. Display their written script (if any).

**Regional Diversity :** Region can be understood as a spatial and temporal construct that exhibits some degree of cultural homogeneity. People within this geographical space identify with the present through its shared past. Narrow regional identities are not however independent of wider networks

of identities. For instance, all regional identifications need to be read contextually.



#### Layered regional identities

Region refers to territorial entities found within the country. For example, one might talk of the North Eastern region, which comprises the “seven sisters”. However, even within a State, there are regions. For example, in Maharashtra State the regions include – Konkan, Vidarbha, Khandesh, Marathwada and Western Maharashtra.

#### You should know!

The North Eastern States of India include the following – Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Mizoram, Manipur and Tripura known as the “seven sisters”.

This region has a very hilly terrain and is immensely rich culturally. A large section of the tribal population of India live here. For example: Garo, Khasi, Naga, Mizo, Zomi, Lepcha, Kuki, Bodo.

You might observe that they also have distinctive physical characteristics in terms of skin colour, hair texture, sunken nose, almond-shaped eyes, double fold of the eye lids.

While each community has its own history, folklore, dance, traditions, and music, many of these have been affected by culture-contact with other communities.

Conversion of large sections to Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam or Christianity is not uncommon. This region also has seen an influx of people from other parts of the Indian subcontinent and outside India.

Each region, has a rich and unique diversity of its own. Its natural environment – rivers, water sources, soil, forests, minerals and its socio-economic and political environment. People within a region are diverse as regards their race, ethnicity, language, dialect, food, customs, mannerisms, beliefs and practices, control mechanisms such as laws, mores etc. Every region has its own and unique history which has shaped its present. For example, in Maharashtra the role and significance of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj is well-established.

**Caste Diversity :** Caste is a major source of diversity in Indian society. The etymology of the term caste is found in the Portuguese word ‘casta’ meaning race. The British used the term caste to define various ethnic groups of India. Sociologists today define caste through two axis i.e. varna and jati. Varna is the overall, overarching ideological division of Hindus into the four-fold hierarchy of Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. It is believed that there are about 3500 jatis found in India, out of which 751 are classified under the Scheduled Caste communities.

The caste system provided the bases of social structure. The different castes functioned in an interdependent barter relationship which was the basis of the agrarian economy. It was also a source of inequality and marginalisation of some communities. It maintains exchange of goods and services between various jatis. It was based on a patron-client relationship. The patron is known as Jajman who used to be a landlord. The client is known as Kamin (from the artisan/ service castes). The Kamin used to

provide services to the Jajman and in return was given rewards in terms of kind (food grains, clothes, and many other considerations like free residential plot, free food, aid in litigation, use of animal and instruments etc.) However, the jajmani system is gradually fading away with the advent of market and monetary economy.

The practice of caste system is not confined to Hindus. Caste-like divisions are seen among Muslims, Christians and Sikhs as well. We have heard of the hierarchy of Amir, Shaikh, Sayyed, Pathan among the Muslims. Furthermore, there are castes like Teli (oil pressure), Dhobi (washerman), Darjee (tailor) etc. among the Muslims. Similarly, caste consciousness among the Christians in India is not unknown. Since a vast majority of Christians in India were converted from the Hindu-fold, some converts have carried their caste system into their Christian identity. Under the Constitutional Order of 1950, which was amended in 1990, the term “Scheduled Caste” can only be used by Hindu, Sikh and Buddhist people who are listed on the schedule, whereas “Scheduled Tribe” persons may have any religious identity. In view of this we can well imagine the extent of caste diversity in India.

**Class Diversity :** Diversity is also based on “class” about which you have studied in the first year Sociology course. Class is typically based on: (i) financial position that is, economic criteria, and (ii) Education.

Our sense of economic class influences the way we think, the choices we make, the prejudices we harbour, our dreams, hopes and aspirations. A consciousness about one’s economic class identity is a lived reality. Thus for example, one makes a choice whether to use public transport or one’s own vehicle to go to work; one decides whether to buy grains from a store in our neighborhood or at a mall, where to study, or how to get married and so on. Those who identify as

“Upper Class” constitute a small minority in Indian society as a whole. The masses identify as belonging to the middle or lower economic strata.

**Gender Diversity :** In order to understand gender diversity it is necessary to appreciate the difference between sex and gender. You might recall discussing gender as a basis for social stratification in Standard XI Sociology.

Gender diversity is linked to the notion of ‘gender’ (a social construct), which in turn is related to concepts such as gender binary, gender expression, sexuality and sexual orientation.



Gender diversity

Gender includes diversities that go beyond gender binaries of female-male, feminine-masculine, her-his etc. Today, our understanding of gender diversity also includes the sexual orientation of people. In this context, you may be familiar with the acronym ‘LGBT’.

- **Lesbian :** Female-Female relationship
- **Gay :** Male-Male relationship
- **Bisexual :** People who are attracted to two sexes (namely, Female and Male)
- **Transgender :** A person whose biological sex does not match one’s psychological sense of self.

What constitutes appropriate behaviour for girls/women and boys/men is a result of social conditioning, indoctrination and cultural definitions. Hence, there is variability between societies, as well as within groups in a specific society. This leads us to understand

the dominance of ‘heteronormativity’ (that is the norm that reinforces and “normalises” the gender binary) in society and in all its institutions such as family, marriage, polity, economy, religion etc. There are individuals, groups and societies which have challenged the notion of a binary and thus are more inclusive of sexual and gender pluralities.

When discussing gender diversity, we need to be aware of a related term which also leads to diversity - *gender expression*. This is inextricably linked to *gender socialisation*. Most of us are coerced into conformity to follow the expectations of gender linked to one’s sex. Today however, societies are gradually opening up to understanding and accepting *gender fluidity* (that is, those persons who do not limit themselves within the binary). Gender fluidity is not a western import but has been a part of our traditional Indian culture. There are references to Hindu deities who were gender fluid.

**Sexuality :** Each individual may relate to another person physically, emotionally and/or sexually. This constitutes one’s sexuality and helps us to understand the **sexual orientation** of a person. It is not a preference; it is not a matter of choice.

You will recall reading about decriminalisation of homosexuality by a historic judgement of the Supreme Court of India on 6<sup>th</sup> September 2018. The Government of India has also recognised transgender people and their rights.

Awareness about and sensitivity to diversities based on gender will help: (i) dispel ignorance and myths related to gender (ii) restore dignity to people with different gender identities (iii) eradicate hate, violence, prejudice and discrimination towards gender non-conforming individuals (iv) promote

equality and justice as enshrined in the Indian Constitution.

### Activity 3

There have been protests regarding The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019.

Find out more about this and hold a class discussion.

## 3.2 UNITY IN DIVERSITY



Unity amidst Diversity

India is a country where people from diverse social locations function as a society. It is not as though no conflicts exist. Indian society is characterised by integration of the plural traditions and cultural practices that give it a sense of we-ness. This assimilation of diverse traditions is enabled by the constitutional mandate of India to remain a secular society. There have been phases where the secular nature of Indian society has been questioned. Nonetheless Indian society has demonstrated much accommodation and resilience.

According to D.P. Singhal, in his book-“India and World Civilisations” unity in diversity is a theme that runs through the entire course of Indian history. There is so much diversity in India along lines of region, language, religion, caste etc. that a picture of unity becomes complex. However, through all these differences, there are cross-cutting solidarities which helps us as a nation to combine and recombine. What does this mean?

India has always assimilated strands of different cultures that it came into contact with and at the same time has retained the essentials of its own. This is a fact that has struck several foreign scholars also. Despite numerous invasions, the people have managed to maintain the spirit of the past. From early times as far back as 2000 years ago, there have been attempts to bring about political unity of India. Towering examples are Emperors Ashoka, Harshvardhan, Vikramaditya and Akbar.

The fact that Indians today, despite their differences, have adapted to political democracy, indicates the underlying unity in diversity. One important point is that the Indian people have never regarded diversity as a problem but more as a treasure to be cherished.

The inner strength of India lies in our ability to accommodate variety and multiplicity within the framework of larger unity. It is the sign of a healthy organism that the processes of integration and differentiation go on side by side. This is indicative of civilisational unity.

In the words of D. P. Singhal, “The forces of unity are like the red blood corpuscles whose proportion in the blood stream should neither rise above nor fall below a certain point. To preserve this balance is not an easy task.”

**Process of unity in India :** At the root of all the co-existing diversities, there exists an underlying unity. This has created a composite culture decisively pan-Indian in nature.

Unity implies oneness or a sense of oneness meaning integration. However, unity does not mean uniformity, which implies similarity. The bond of unity in relation to India’s heritage in a certain underlying uniformity of life, has been reflected in the

observations of many foreigners too. Unity amidst diversity is visualised in the geo-political sphere, institution of pilgrimage, tradition of accommodation, tradition of interdependence, emotional bonding etc.

The concept of secularism in the Indian context is particularly useful, given the nature of our religious plurality. In India, secularism implies respect and tolerance for people of all faiths. This is beautifully encapsulated in the term, 'sarvadharmasamabhav'. India has been and continues to be a land with multiple faith systems. This necessarily includes acceptance of people who do not subscribe to any religious identity, custom or practice, but who may express their loyalty and commitment to secular values such as scientific endeavour, humanitarianism, humanism and so forth.

#### Why do we need unity?

- To strengthen and enrich our cultural heritage
- To protect the multiple diversities of Indian society
- To protect Human Rights of all citizens.
- To boost workplace, organisational and community morale.
- For effective and inclusive communication
- For conflict resolution
- For peaceful coexistence
- For the welfare of all people irrespective of caste, creed, sex, gender, race, economic class, culture etc.
- For prosperity of our land and its people

**Geographical Unity :** India like every other country has its own boundaries that are natural. In the North stands the Great Himalayas and water bodies on the other sides of the Indian peninsula. Climate

conditions vary to a large extent in different parts of India, though the overarching monsoon season connects the whole of the country.

#### You should know!

Interestingly the term monsoon originates from the Arabic word, Mausum coined by the Arab traders who did business with the various kingdoms in this region.

One would find some kind of unity in the agrarian cycles such as the sowing season and the harvest season. The natural resources such as rivers, minerals and forests cut across the length and breadth of India. Sharing of these resources gives the people a sense of oneness. Festivals such as Onam in Kerala, Makar Sankrant in Western and South India, Pongal in Tamil Nadu, Baisakhi in Punjab and Bihu in Assam revolve around the harvest season.

**Religious Unity :** Although various religious groups in India present external difference, it is not impossible to trace some commonly shared elements. Each religion preaches fundamentally religious faith, and shares a belief in the value of life, benevolence, piety and virtues such as honesty, simplicity, goodness etc. India is a land of diverse religious faiths.

Religious unity in India finds its expression through places of worship scattered all over the country. Visitors from India and abroad throng to religious places of Hindus as Badrainarayan in the North, Dwarka in the West and Ramashwaram in the South and Puri in the East; the Golden Temple of the Sikhs in Amritsar, the Christian church at Velankanni, the Jewish synagogue in Fort Kochi, shrines of Muslim saints, Ajmer Dargah etc. Festivals such as Kumbh Mela, Feast of Mother Mary, Kurukshetra festival, Ganpati, Durga Puja, Moharram, Thrissurpuram

attract lakhs of people of all faiths, year after year. Despite differences of individual religious practice, religious celebrations and days continue to represent the religious unity of this vast country.



*Thrissur Pooram festival (Kerala)*

### **Role of Religion in Social Integration**

M.N.Srinivas examines the role of religion in social integration as a binding force among individuals and groups. He refers to three points: (1) The relations between different castes and religious groups at the village and other local levels, (2) The general role of religion in the economic development of the country; and (3) Religion and socio-economic privileges. There is an association between religious communities and specific economic functions they perform. The spread of various communities all over the country and diversification of their economic activities have strengthened the process of social integration.

#### **Activity 4**

Class Discussion in small groups:

Topic: Religion can be a force that unifies and divides society.

Assignment based on discussion.

**Political Unity :** India is a plural society both in letter and spirit. It is rightly characterised by its unity and diversity. National unity and integrity have been maintained even though sharp economic and social inequalities have obstructed the emergence of an egalitarian society. The Five-Year Plans and several developmental schemes were geared towards uplifting the poor and weaker sections of society as a whole.

The Constitution of India has established the “rule of law” throughout the country. All citizens are equal and subject to the same authority. Religion, language, region, caste, gender or community is no longer the basis of special social status, powers and privileges. The weaker sections of society - the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes, Denotified Tribes, Other Backward Classes, Religious, Linguistic and Sexual Minorities have been given special concessions for their amelioration. Colonial exploitation has been replaced by processes of development and an egalitarian ideology.

#### **Activity 5**

Find out about various schemes started by the government for welfare of: (i) STs (ii) SCs (iii) Women (iv) Disabled persons. Share your findings in your class.

**Linguistic Unity :** Linguistic unity means that every language in the country, whether regional or national language, must be treated equally. The Indian State recognises linguistic diversities and also makes special provisions to protect and support some of the languages and dialects that are on the verge of extinction.

The three-language formula followed by all State Education Boards enables the inculcation of Hindi and English as languages to connect with the Union, English to connect with the outside world and the regional/local

## You should know!

### The Three Language Formula

The Three Language Formula (TLF) was devised in the Chief Minister's conference – 1961. The Kothari Commission (1964-66) examined and recommended the same. As per the policy the three languages recommended were:

- (i) **1<sup>st</sup> language** : Regional Language or Mother Tongue.
- (ii) **2<sup>nd</sup> language** : English or Modern Indian Language (in Hindi speaking States)  
Hindi or English (in non-Hindi speaking States)
- (iii) **3<sup>rd</sup> language** : English or

Modern Indian Language (in Hindi speaking States)

English or Modern Indian Language not studied as 2nd language (in non-Hindi speaking States).

Most States in India have implemented the TLF. Challenges for a meaningful implementation continue.

✓ Find out the States that have adopted the TLF.

**Note** : Today you can use the term '**Home Language**' instead of "Mother Tongue". This is especially useful when relating to families where spouses come from different linguistic backgrounds.

language for communication within the State. Classical languages and languages of linguistic minorities have also found a place in educational curricula. Many educational bodies offer learners the option of answering their examinations in a range of mediums (e.g. Marathi, Hindi, Urdu, Gujarati, Kannada, English). Doordarshan and Akashwani have programmes in multiple Indian languages that reach out to millions of persons who tune in to them. These are measures that promote a sense of linguistic unity among multi-lingual people of the land.

However, language is a double-edged sword: it can act as a barrier for many on the one hand, and on the other, it serves as a bridge, linking people from across the country.

**Cultural Unity** : Indian culture exhibits cultural unity, reflected in the literature and thought of different communities despite the obvious differences in customs and traditions. Festivals like Diwali, Onam, Eid, Raksha Bandhan, New Year, Christmas are remembered and celebrated all over the country. This is possible only because cultural

unity does exist in India. Various saints, writers, artistes (for example Aurobindo, Mother Teresa, Baba Amte, Tagore, Bhimsen Joshi, Ara, Nizzim Ezekiel) through their life work have evinced the feeling of belonging to each other, a sense of identity of purpose and emotion.

There are various patriotic renditions of the National Anthem or films based on the principle of cultural integration. These have showcased classical musicians, singers, folk artists, crafts persons, artists, sportspersons, dance forms, defence services, philanthropists, reformers etc. Such presentations evoke a sense of love, concern as well as pride for that which is Indian.

### 3.3

### CHALLENGES TO NATIONAL UNITY

India has always been seen by scholars as a unique example of unity in diversity in spite of regional, linguistic, religious and ethnic differences dividing India into apparently irreconcilable social groups. The diversities in terms of communities, races,

classes, languages and sub-cultures are bound to pose obstacles to the achievement of national integration. The following factors which obstruct the growth of national feeling viz. casteism, communalism, regionalism, linguism, and economic inequalities have been outlined below.

**Casteism :** Casteism refers to loyalty to one's own caste before loyalty to the nation. Caste ties are so strong that people are inclined to think in terms of caste before the nation. This may lead to caste members protecting their own caste group through social service, education, medical and other welfare schemes. This can lead to several problems viz. it can restrict interaction in society. Also, when such caste loyalty takes political overtones, it becomes dangerous. This is because caste members take with them their biases and prejudices into politics. They then begin to express their petty jealousies and sectarian interests in various ways. People are influenced by them and vote for their own caste members. Those castes having numerical strength rise up through politics. Those who win the elections then favour their caste groups in various ways. In view of all this, the problem of national integration becomes very serious.

Despite laws, urbanisation, industrialisation and education, the caste system continues in the mindsets of many people. Caste has become a means for competing for access to resources and power in modern India. Discrimination on the basis of caste is a major hurdle for national integration. People engaged in weakening the unity of the country tried desperately to create divisions and rifts in the name of caste, creed and culture. They succeeded in creating mistrust among Indian people. The feeling of social neglect among scheduled castes due to suppression by upper castes has disturbed the sense of 'we feeling' and unity.

Caste atrocities get reported from time

to time. Caste prejudices are yet another factor that affects the way people behave or relate to others. Excessive caste-based loyalty is particularly evident at the time of elections, with political parties wooing members of their own caste for the sake of votes.

### **Caste and Reservation**

The Constitution of India, allows affirmative action through positive discrimination (reservation) in education and employment, which is based on caste and socio-economic backwardness for STs and SCs. Later, this was extended to Other Backward Classes (OBCs). Recently the GOI has announced 10% quota for Economically Weaker Sections (EWS). These reservations are restricted to government-run or government-aided institutions. The Central Government has fixed 15 per cent reservations for Scheduled Castes (SC), 7.5 per cent for Scheduled Tribes (ST) and 27 per cent for Other Backward Classes (OBC). A sizeable proportion of Scheduled Castes who have embraced Buddhism and Christianity also qualify for such reservations.

**Communalism :** Communalism refers mainly to loyalty to one's own religion before the nation. India is one of the countries in the world where so many religions co-exist side by side. While on the one hand this enriches our cultural heritage, at the same time we also make sure that this does not become a cause for separatism.

Communal conflict is one of the worst blots on national reputation. It is a displeasing factor that affects the unity of the nation. Whatever may be the cause of the conflict, the damage it does to the nation is very deep and far reaching.

Socially speaking, communal conflict creates feelings of deep hatred, bitterness and antagonism between members of different religious communities. Such conflicts also lead to feelings of insecurity and they loosen

bonds of solidarity.

Economically speaking, communal conflicts retard economic growth and development. Often, resources have to be diverted for the damage caused by communal riots and clashes. Production suffers and there is severe monetary loss for the nation.

Politically speaking, communal conflict weakens democracy. It allows politicians to use religion as leverage into positions of prominence for their vested interests. Also, on the international front, communal conflict affects India's image adversely and weakens it considerably.

Religious antagonism has posed a serious challenge to national integration in India. Our history is fraught with accounts of frequent conflicts due to religious differences. People belonging to different religions feel that their religion is superior; this is a problem of enhanced ethnocentrism. Religious fundamentalists try to impose their religious practices on others, which leads to situations of conflict.

Political manipulation is often known to project one religion against the other which has resulted in communal riots, mutual distrust and disintegration. Large scale illiteracy and superstitions are responsible, along with other causes for the rise of communal violence and divisive tendencies in the country.

Religious fundamentalism can lead to acts of terrorism which can create a fear psychosis in the minds of people.

**Regionalism :** Regionalism refers to loyalty to one's own State or region before one's nation. This interferes with national integration to a great extent. The history of a particular region is glorified and often it is misused to stress divisive forces, thus ignoring the common cultural legacy and heritage.

Regionalism emerges due to the desire of people speaking one language to have one

State. There is also a strong urge to give priority to the economic development of one's own region. This leads to Inter-State rivalries.

So long as this Inter-State rivalry is economic and social (e.g. for funds and welfare schemes), it is healthy. But when this rivalry takes political overtones, it becomes very dangerous. Political parties give more importance and weightage to local and regional matters and problems rather than the nation as a whole. Regionalism thus strengthens sectarian biases by political parties. Inter-regional tensions escalate over economic, political and such issues. This has led to regional movements for State rights and militant movements for separatism. For example, the Jammu and Kashmir issue, the Punjab problem, Assam issue etc. All this, if unchecked, can strike at the very root of democracy.

**Linguism :** Linguism has its origin in the linguistic division of States and the linguistic minorities within the State. In every State, there is one dominant regional language. Along with this, there are other large sections speaking other regional languages and dialects. They constitute the linguistic minorities. For example, in Maharashtra, Marathi is the dominant regional language. At the same time, there are a large number of people speaking Gujarati, Konkani, Sindhi, Punjabi, Tamil, Kannada etc. Even among Marathi-speaking people, there are variations in dialect. If these minorities begin to feel that their interests are being disregarded and their welfare ignored, such a feeling is harmful to our national unity and solidarity.

Linguism today has acquired seriousness and intensity. It has led to a definite form of linguistic nationalism which can provide enough impetus for separatism in India.

Language plays an important role in communication in an organisation. It enables us express opinions, share feelings and convey messages and build knowledge. When

language becomes the basis for conflict between people, this problem is called linguism. It is a form of excess loyalty towards one's own language. Linguistic fanaticism poses a threat to national integration.

Indian States have been divided on a linguistic basis. People of one language try to establish their language over others. There is conflict on the language issue even today. The notion of Hindi as an official language of the union does not find complete acceptance across the country. There are many parts within India, where Hindi is largely unspoken – especially in South India and in some North Eastern States.

The hounding of people who speak languages other than the dominant language is well-known. The atrocities committed on linguistic minorities deserves mention. The underrepresentation of tribal dialects and minority languages and decline in the study of literature of various languages is also a matter of concern.

**Economic Inequalities :** The economic standard of people in a State depends on a number of factors like resources available, management and organisation, fertility of land, distribution of wealth and so on. All States are not equal in this regard and this leads to economic imbalances. Unequal distribution of wealth within a State causes tension and conflict. Very often, wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few. Profits from the private sector end up in the hands of a few privileged sections and not for the common good. This kind of monopoly does not allow healthy competition.

There are several factors that are responsible for economic inequality in society. These include:

**(1) Family influence :** The family to which we belong influences our choices and opportunities. For example, if one belongs to the 'Below Poverty Line' (BPL) category it may be difficult for the parents to provide healthy nutrition. Don't we come across news

of malnutrition deaths of infants?

**(2) Private property :** Numerous people do not own physical property on the one hand, and on the other, there are very few who own excessive property. It is true that the large part of resources available are consumed by relatively few people who have the means to do so.

**(3) Educational differences :** This is often influenced by the economic strata to which one identifies and belongs. Ask yourself - 'Who are the persons who can avail of professional courses? Who can afford private school education? Who can afford an international education?'

**(4) Availability and access to opportunities :** The purchasing capacity of individuals and groups determine our patterns of consumption and the extent of consumption. For example, so many anganwadis and Primary Health Centres have no budgetary provisions to improve their infrastructure and services. How many children can have access to mental health care, counsellors and psychologists?

**(5) Individual differences :** All of us have different capacities and capabilities. These are a combination of our individual potential as well as one's societal experiences. For example, an individual may have a flair for art, music or acting. However, unless there is scope to develop these abilities/skills, it may be impossible to utilise one's talent for individual or social benefit.

**(6) Social environment :** The social environment in which one experiences life (for example: family, neighbourhood, peer group, work place) influences and impacts how we develop as individuals and as a society.

The impact of globalisation has both positive and negative consequences. One demerit is that it has widened the gap between the rich and the poor. For example, the "mall"

culture found in the big cities clearly favour those who “have” than the “have not’s”. Privatisation of health care, insurance, occupation and education are more beneficial to the upper economic strata of society.

Economic inequality persists in all social systems of society. Even liberal democracies that are committed to equal citizenship have not been able to escape this problem. In a free market system, inequality inevitably arises. People have different access to rewards (such as money, influence, power etc.) because of their personal or group characteristics. This exists in all societies across the globe. So those with higher status generally have better access to rewards compared to those with a lower status. Inequality is thus built into the fabric of society and tends to get passed down from one generation to the next.

Welfare State and differing slabs of taxation were ways in which attempts were made to minimise economic inequalities. It was thought that perhaps redistributing wealth from the affluent to the needy would help to eradicate poverty. However, this does not always work because help may not necessarily reach those in need. Equality then seems like a receding horizon.

However, our understanding of equality and inequality is undergoing a change. Today, significant changes are observed in the status of women, minorities and the underprivileged. Side by side, we face new

risks and threats to our environment – which do not discriminate between the rich and the poor. For example, pollution, global warming, and terrorism, lack of hygiene or cleanliness – these are problems which are created by human beings and which need a collective effort. As we address such issues, welfare does not only remain at material prosperity, but about the overall wellbeing of all people. Some policies have to promote social cohesion and interdependence. So also, rights and responsibilities are for all; from the bottom of the social hierarchy to the top.

### Check your progress

1. Identify two Constitutional provisions to protect weaker sections in Indian society.
2. What do you understand by three-language formula?
3. Identify three factors that hinder national unity.

### Activity 6

#### Conduct a debate on :

- (a) Laws to protect minority groups help to integrate them into society.
- (b) The caste system should be abolished.
- (c) Protective discrimination is necessary in Indian society.

### Activity 7

#### Conduct a class/group discussion on:

‘Measures to promote National Unity.’

## SUMMARY

- India is a land of diversities and yet there is a sense of we-feeling which unifies us, as a people.
- Diversities are of various kinds: race, religion, language, region, caste, class, gender.
- Factors that have contributed towards a sense of unity include the following: geographical factor, religious factor, political factor, linguistic factor and cultural factor.
- There are also forces that threaten national unity as well as national integration. These factors are: casteism, communalism, regionalism, linguism and economic inequality.
- The need of the hour is to develop an empathetic understanding of our multiple diversities, and work towards strengthening the overall sense of national unity and emotional integration.

## EXERCISES

**Q.1 (A) Complete the following statements by choosing the correct alternative given in the bracket and rewrite it.**

- (1) Gender is \_\_\_\_.  
(innate, genetic, learnt)
- (2) "Social disparity encourages \_\_\_\_.  
(unity, divisiveness, homogeneity)

**(B) Correct the incorrect pair and rewrite it.**

- (1) (i) Conflict based on language - Linguism  
(ii) Conflict based on religion - Terrorism  
(iii) Conflict based on caste - Casteism  
(iv) Conflict based on region - Regionalism

**(C) Identify the appropriate term from the given option in the box and rewrite it against the given statement.**

Totalitarianism, Class, Egalitarianism

- (1) It is an achieved status.

- (2) Promotes healthier relationships

**(D) Correct the underlined words and complete the statement.**

- (1) Conflict based on caste is called communalism.
- (2) Sarvadharmasmabhava denotes the Indian concept of unity amidst diversity.

**Q.2 Write short notes.**

- (1) Gender Diversity
- (2) Importance of Unity in Diversity

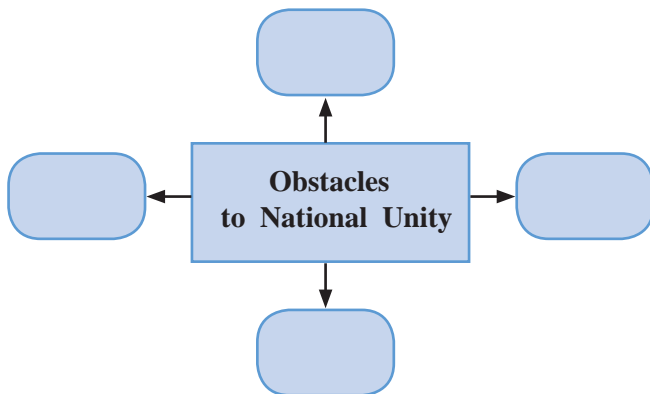
**Q.3 Write differences.**

- (1) Regionalism and Linguism
- (2) Casteism and Communalism

**Q.4 Explain the following concepts with examples.**

- (1) Heteronormativity
- (2) Communalism

**Q.5 (A) Complete the concept map.**



**(B) State whether the following statements are True or False with reasons.**

- (1) Economic inequality has no effect on society.
- (2) Constitutional and legal provisions provide hope to weaker sections in Indian society.

**Q.6 Give your personal response.**

- (1) How can participation in sports foster national integration?
- (2) What is the significance of school

uniforms in Indian schools, with regard to the value of unity?

**Q.7 Answer the following question in detail. (About 150 words)**

What does unity mean to you? Discuss any three factors which hinder unity. Describe two ways in which tribal and urban people can benefit each other to promote unity. Give examples to illustrate your points.

**Activity**

As a class, collaborate with any association/club within your school and organise a co-curricular activity open to all staff, students, parents and the neighbourhood.

Aim: To promote unity.

Examples: Food Festival, Traditional Day, Fancy Dress, Poetry Reading, Skit, Group Dance.

