

CHAPTER-2: DIVERSITY AND DISCRIMINATION

MODULE -1/2

We have learnt the meaning of diversity in the previous chapter. Sometimes, people who are 'different' from others are teased, laughed at or not included in a certain activity or group. We feel hurt, angry, helpless or sad when friends or others treat us in such ways. Have you ever wondered why this happens?

In this chapter, 'Diversity and Discrimination' we shall understand how such experiences are related to the society and how they are connected to the inequalities that exist around us.

This module covers the following topics and concepts:

- Difference and Prejudice
- Creating Stereotypes

Difference (diversity) and Prejudice

Diversity: Different languages, religions, regions, rituals, customs and traditions constitute diversity.

There are many things that make us what we are-how we live, the language we speak, the clothes we wear, the food we eat, the religion we follow, the festivals we celebrate etc. All these are influenced both by geography and history of the place where we live in.

India is a land of diverse cultures, religions and communities.

All the eight major religions of the world are practiced in India.

India has more than 1600 languages and has more than 100 dance forms.

Yet, this diversity is not always celebrated. This is because we feel safe and secure with people who look, dress and think like us.

Sometimes when we meet people who are very different from us may find them strange and unfamiliar. So people form certain attitudes and opinions about others who are not like them.

Take an example of rural and urban people. Below are some statements on people living in rural and urban areas.

On Rural People

- More than 50% of all the Indians live in villages.
- Villagers don't care about their health. They are full of superstitions.
- People on villages are backward and do not like to use modern agriculture technology.

On Urban People

- Life in the city is easy. People here are spoilt and lazy.
- In cities families spend little time with each other.
- People in cities only care about money.
- Living in a city is expensive.
- City people cannot be trusted, they are cunning, corrupt and stingy.

Some of the statements above show villagers as dirty, ignorant and superstitious, and show people in cities as money-minded, lazy and cunning.

When our opinion about certain people are always negative, then these become *prejudices* that we carry about them.

Prejudice: means judging other people negatively or seeing them as inferior. For example, if we think that English is the best language and other languages are not important, we are judging the other languages negatively. As a result we do not respect the people who speak languages other than English.

Thus, we can be prejudiced about many things: people's religious beliefs, color of their skin, the region they come from, the accent they speak in, the clothes they wear etc. often our prejudices about others are so strong and at times we may even act in ways that hurt them.

So prejudices are our opinions that we make about certain people who are different from us. By prejudice we mean, "To judge others negatively and with inferiority"

Creating Stereotypes

Stereotype: The process of fixing people into an image is called Stereotype. When we fix people into one image or group, we create a stereotype.

All of us are familiar with gender differences. As children grow up, boys and girls are taught to do certain types of works. They are fixed to certain images. There are many stereotypes regarding boys and girls.

For example, if we take the statement “They don’t cry”, you will see that this is a quality generally associated with boys and men. When boy fall and hurt themselves, their parents console them by saying “Don’t cry. You are a boy. Boys are brave, they don’t cry.” So boys grow up believing that they do not cry and it is a sign of weakness.

When we take other statement such as “Girls are soft and gentle or well-behaved.” “They are good at cooking” etc., we are creating stereotypes about boys and girls and fit them into one image that society creates around them.

When people say that those who belong to a particular country, religion, race, gender or economic background or stingy, lazy, criminal or dumb, they are using stereotypes. There are stingy and generous people everywhere, in every county, in every religion, in every group whether rich or poor, male or female.

And just because some people are like that it is not fair to think that everyone will be the same. So stereotypes stop us from looking at each person as unique individual with special qualities and skills and prevent us from doing certain things.

The children with disabilities are no more called “Disabled Children”. They are now called “Children with special needs”. Many stereotype statements are passed against them.

A common stereotype about Muslims is that they are not interested in educating girls and they do not send them to school.

Poverty is the main reason why Muslim girls don’t attend the school or drop out from school after few years.
