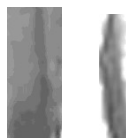


# CIVICS



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## Understanding Diversity

### Diversity

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#### Meaning of Diversity

When people follow different religions, cultures, practices and speak different languages while living together peacefully, they present an example of unity in diversity. Each one of us differs from one another in one way or the other. Some people speak different languages, some eat different foods, and some follow distinct social and religious practices. Therefore, diversity refers to the religious, cultural, regional, linguistic and geographical differences which exist among the people. It also means that in spite of all these differences, people live together and respect the distinct identities of each other.



India presents an example of unity in diversity

Diversity adds colour and variety to our lives. It

helps us to learn those customs, practices and languages which are not followed by us. It also gives us an opportunity to enjoy food from different regions in the country.

People became different from each other as they settled in different places. Sometimes they spread their culture and practices among the local people or assimilated the local culture and habits. Diversity can be explained in following ways:

- Many years ago, people travelled from one part of the world to the other parts by ships, or on camels, horsebacks or on foot.
- They often travelled in search of new lands where they could either trade or settle down.
- Since travelling in the olden days was difficult (as planes, trains and cars were not known) people settled into the new places. Sometimes people also travelled due to famines or droughts in their own lands.
- At the new places, people began to construct houses and began to adopt the ways of the local people while still following their old habits.
- Thus, their food, culture, traditions and the languages became a fusion of the old and new practices. As a result, new and different customs, practices, foods, dresses and languages emerged.
- Due to these reasons, many regions in the world have become diverse because of their unique histories.
- Geographical diversity also affects the lives of the people. For example, the life and activities of people living in the coastal regions is different from the activities of the people living in the desert regions.
- The occupation of the people therefore, also differs from region to region.

### India- A Land of Diversity

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India is a multi-religious, multicultural and multilingual plural country. People of India speak different languages, follow different religions, eat various kinds of food and celebrate many festivals like Holi, Diwali, Eid, Christmas, Onam, Lohri etc. together.

In India, geographical and historical factors have influenced the diversity of various regions. This can be explained by taking examples of two distinct regions in India- Ladakh and Kerala.

## Ladakh

- Ladakh is a cold desert in the eastern part of Jammu and Kashmir.
- As it is covered with snow for almost the entire year, hardly any major crop is grown here.
- The main occupation of people is the rearing of sheep and other animals.
- The world famous pashmina shawls are made from the pashmina wool which is obtained from the sheep of this region. After the wool is collected from the sheep, it is sold to the traders in Kashmir. Pashmina shawls are mainly woven in Kashmir.
- People eat meat and milk products like butter and cheese. Almost each family owns a few cows, yaks and goats.
- Though, Ladakh is a cold desert, traders still visit this place. In the ancient times, many travellers and traders passed through Ladakh in order to reach Tibet. Spices, silk and carpets were main items of trade in this region.



Ladakh is a cold desert.

## Kerala

- Kerala lies in south western part of the country and is surrounded by the sea and hills.
- During the medieval period, the state attracted traders due to various spices which were grown here like cloves and cardamoms.
- Jewish and Arab traders were the first to visit this state. The Apostle of Christ, Saint Thomas is believed to have come here about 2000 years ago and is supposed to have brought Christianity to India.
- Ibn Battuta, while visiting the state mentioned that Muslims were greatly respected in the region.
- It was the Portuguese sailor Vasco da Gama who discovered the sea route from Europe to India and landed with his ship here.
- Due to these various historical and religious influences, the people of Kerala practice religions like Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism.
- Fishermen here use nets called *cheenaval* which are similar to Chinese nets.
- Kerala is a fertile land and rice is the chief crop grown here. People consume rice, vegetables and fish.



Kerala is known for its lagoons and backwaters.



The state of Kerala is famous for spices.

The above description of the two states of Ladakh and Kerala show that while both the states have different geographical features, their culture was influenced by the Chinese and Arab travellers and traders. Their history and geography have played a significant part in shaping the present religious and cultural lives of the people.

## Unity in Diversity

India being a land of diversities has taught and inspired the people to intermingle and live with each other amicably. Since ancient times, people belonging to different religions and cultures came and settled in India. They exchanged their cultures, ideas, foods, habits and philosophies which enriched the culture of our country. The unity of the people of India is the source of its strength. During the British rule, people belonging to different religions and regions participated in the national movement. The British planned to create a rift among the



India during the freedom struggle

Indians on the basis of religious and regional differences, but the people fought against them with unity and forced them to leave the country. It was our unity which led to the freedom of the country. Jawaharlal Nehru in his book, 'Discovery of India' has described the diversity of the Indian culture. He was the first person in India who coined the term 'unity in diversity'.