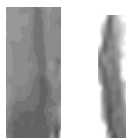
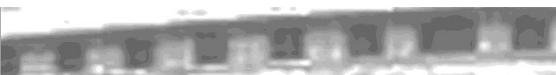


CIVICS



Diversity and Discrimination

Prejudice and Stereotypes

India is a nation where people belonging to different castes, classes and religions live together. All the eight major religions are practised in India and more than 1600 languages are spoken by the people. However, diversity is not always celebrated as people feel safe and secured with people belonging to their own religion, caste and class.

Prejudice means to judge others in a negative way or to see them as inferior. People who are prejudiced may criticise the religious beliefs, habits, customs, dressing styles and languages of other people.

When people judge others on the basis of certain preconceived notions and established norms, they create a stereotype. For example, 'girls are emotionally fragile but boys are emotionally strong' is a popular stereotype.



A woman breaking a stereotype by driving an auto rickshaw

Discrimination

Discrimination is the result of prejudiced thinking and creating stereotypes. Discrimination occurs when people are treated unequally and are not given due respect because of the caste to which they belong or because of the work they do. In India, people are discriminated against on the basis of their caste, class, gender, religion, wealth and occupation. For example, people belonging to the lower castes are discriminated against in various ways. In many areas even today, they are neither allowed to enter into temples nor can they draw water from wells. Discrimination can occur due the existence of diversities such as:

- **Religious diversity:** When people belong to different religions are prevented from residing in the same neighbourhood.
- **Social diversity:** Discriminations based on castes and gender.
- **Economic diversity:** This occurs when people belonging to poor sections are discriminated against in offices, schools, hospitals etc. by not treating them properly as they are poor.

Mostly, people belonging to the lower castes are also poor. Tribals and poor people belonging to minority communities also experience discrimination.

Caste Discrimination

- Discrimination based on the caste system has been in practice in India since ancient times.
- The Indian society is divided into four castes. People of the lower caste are generally engaged in doing menial works like cleaning, washing, picking garbage etc.
- The people belonging to the upper castes look down upon the **dalits**. They are considered to be unworthy and **untouchable**.
- The people of the lower caste use the word 'dalit' for themselves as the word itself means 'broken'. This reflects how people belonging to upper castes have discriminated against them out of their prejudices. The government has listed the dalits as 'Scheduled Castes'.

- The caste system denied any other work to the untouchables except for the work such as picking up garbage, removing dead animals, making leather etc.
- The untouchables were not even allowed to enter into the homes of the people of the upper castes, to draw water from the public wells or to enter into temples.
- In village schools, the children of the dalits were discriminated against. They were not allowed to sit with their classmates, which again is a form of discrimination and which denied them respect and dignity.



In many places even today, the dalits are not given entry into the temples.

Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar is considered to be the father of the Indian constitution. He belonged to the 'mahar caste' which was considered to be untouchable and forced to live in the outskirts of villages. Dr. Ambedkar was the first person from his caste who not only completed his college education but also went on to become a lawyer in England.

He was moved by the treatment meted out to the people of the lower caste. He asked the dalits to send their children to school and colleges. He also encouraged them to opt for government jobs in order to move out of the caste system. He protested against the denial of entry of the dalits into

temples. Later he converted into Buddhism, which treated all its members equally. Dr Ambedkar believed that the dalits would have to fight against the injustice which was meted out to them by the people.



Dr. B R Ambedkar provided leadership to the dalit communities in India.

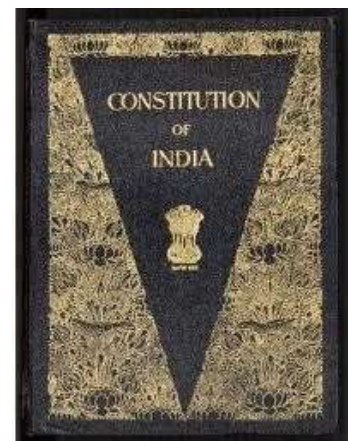
Striving for Equality by the Dalits and the Indian Constitution

During the freedom struggle, people were not only fighting against the British rule for gaining independence, but many of the dalits, tribals and women were fighting to gain equality and dignity in the Indian society.

While the dalits demanded entry into temples, women demanded the right to education. Peasants and tribals demanded that they should be released from the grip of the moneylenders, which often charged high rates of interests and snatched away their lands and homes.

After gaining freedom, one of the most important tasks in front of our leaders was to frame the constitution of the country. The leaders framed a constitution which stressed on the following points:

- All people of the country should be considered equal. It was felt that the principle of equality would unite the people within the country.
- Everyone should have equal rights and opportunities. Untouchability was abolished and was made a crime punishable by law.
- People are free to choose the kind of work that they want to do.
- The government was entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring and protecting the right of the suppressed and marginalised communities.
- The principle of equality and freedom to the people to follow any religion was a key element of establishing secularism.



The constitution of India lays down the principle of equality for all the people irrespective of their caste or creed.