Chapter – 11:

A society is not only built on equality, but also on fairness and respect for humans in all their diversity. Sexual Orientation is one such diversity. The term refers to the classification of individuals as heterosexual, bisexual, or homosexual, based on their emotional and sexual attractions, relationships, self-identity and behavior. **Heterosexuality** refers to the predominance of emotional and sexual attraction to individuals of the other sex. **Homosexuality** refers to the predominance of emotional and sexual attraction to individuals of the same sex, and **bisexuality** is emotional and sexual attraction to members of both sexes. This is not a new diversity. Throughout human history and in most human societies, homosexual behavior has existed. Although many countries have decriminalized same-sex marriage, 86 members of the UN have still not accepted it. Countries like Nigeria, Sudan etc. have gone to an extent where homosexual acts are now subject to death penalty (2008). Factors like religion, lack of knowledge etc. affect the status of homosexuality. In 2008, 66 nations at the General Assembly of the United Nations signed a resolution decriminalizing homosexuality and confirming that international human rights protections include sexual orientation and gender identity. The resolution includes language prohibiting harassment, discrimination, exclusion, stigmatization, and prejudice against members of the GLBT population. G. W. Bush had refused to sign the resolution while he was in office. President Obama signed the resolution in 2009. US being one of the most diversified countries in the current generation have been under focus when it comes to demography of homosexuality and bisexuality. There have been problems when it comes to classifying individuals on the basis of sexual orientation. The distinction is not as clear-cut as it may seem. The early research on sexual orientation showed that 37 per cent of men and 13 per cent of women have had at least one same-sex sexual experience since adolescence. The conclusion was that people are neither completely homosexual nor completely heterosexual. Sexual orientation classification is complicated by the fact that many people who are sexually attracted to or have had sexual relations with individuals of the same sex do not view themselves as homosexual or bisexual. The beliefs about the what people think “causes” of homosexuality have been one of prime importance. Most individuals who are gay believe that homosexuality is an inherited, inborn trait. Individuals who believe that homo- sexuality is biologically based tend to be more accepting of homosexuality. In contrast, those who believe homosexuals choose their sexual orientation are far less tolerant of gays and lesbians and more likely to conclude homosexuality should be illegal than those who think sexual orientation is not a matter of personal choice. Questions have been asked about whether reparative therapy or conversion therapy have an effect on a person to change their sexuality. Not accepting sexual orientation as a diversity also leads to inequality for those who are more inclusive of the idea. The supporters of Structural-Functionalist Perspective emphasize the importance of monogamous heterosexual relationships for the reproduction, nurturance, and socialization of children. From a structural-functionalist perspective, homosexual relations, as well as heterosexual nonmarital relations, are “deviant” because they do not fulfill the main function of the family institution—producing and rearing children. Some structural functionalists argue that antagonisms between individuals who are heterosexual and homosexual disrupt the natural state, or equilibrium, of society. The conflict perspective frames the gay rights movement and the opposition to it as a struggle over power, prestige, and economic resources. This struggle is largely over prestige, or social respect. Sexual orientation minorities want to be recognized as full and decent human beings who are deserving of all the rights and protections entitled to individuals who are heterosexual. Symbolic interactionism focuses on the meanings of heterosexuality, homosexuality, and bisexuality; how these meanings are socially constructed; and how they influence the social status, self-concepts, and well-being of non-heterosexual individuals. The meanings we associate with same-sex relations are learned from society—from family, peers, religion, and the media. The symbolic interactionist perspective also points to the effects of labeling on individuals. Once individuals become identified or labeled as lesbian, gay, or bisexual, that label tends to become their master status.Homophobia and biphobia, the beliefs to discriminate and stigmatize those sexual orientations have been ever present. Although most US adults agree on equal jobs irrespective of sexual orientation, workplaces have seen a lot of discrimination and harassment. many workplaces have nondiscrimination policies that cover LGBT employees. But gay-friendly policies don’t ensure friendly attitudes and behaviors from coworkers. Discrimination in the military has also been noted in the US. Although the “Don’t ask, Don’t Tell” policy does not prohibit gays from serving in the military, it prohibits gays from revealing their sexual orientation (and it also prohibits recruiting officers from asking recruits about their sexual orientation). Service members who reveal their sexual orientation, or who are investigated for being suspected of being gay, can lose their jobs. More than 12,000 service members have been discharged under DADT since it took effect, and countless others have decided not to join the military due to this discriminatory law. The “Don’t ask, don’t tell” policy also provides an additional means for servicemen to harass lesbian service members by threatening to “out” those who refused their advances or threatening to report them, thus ending their careers. Not only this but there has been discrimination in marriages, hate crimes against sexual orientation minorities and also foster care. LGBT are still not considered as a normal human being and are being stigmatized. Things are improving. Policies to safeguard the rights of such communities have been adopted. Still there is a long way to go for the humankind to accept this diversity.