



CBSE Notes Class 10 Political Science Chapter 4 – Gender, Religion and Caste

Gender and Politics

The gender division tends to be understood as natural and unchangeable. It is not based on biology but on social expectations and stereotypes.

Public/Private Division

The result of this division of labour is that though women constitute half of humanity, their role in public life, especially politics, is minimal in most societies. Earlier, only men were allowed to participate in public affairs, vote and contest for public offices. Gradually the gender issue was raised in politics. It demanded to enhance the political and legal status of women and improve their educational and career opportunities. The movements which were raised by women to get equality in personal and family life are called **Feminist movements**.

The political expression of gender division and political mobilisation helped to improve women's role in public life. As India is a male-dominated, PATRIARCHAL society, women face disadvantage, discrimination and oppression in various ways:

1. The literacy rate among women is only 54 per cent compared with 76 per cent among men.
2. On average, an Indian woman works one hour more than an average man every day and yet much of her work is not paid. The Equal Remuneration Act of 1976 provides that equal wages should be paid to equal work.
3. In India, sex-selective abortion led to a decline in the child-sex ratio (number of girl children per thousand boys).
4. Urban areas have become particularly unsafe for women.

Women's Political Representation

Issues related to women are not given adequate attention. This has led many feminists and women's movements to the conclusion that unless women control power, their problems will not get adequate attention. In India, the percentage of elected women members in Lok Sabha touched 12 percent of its total strength for the first time in 2014. Their share in the state assemblies is less than 5 per cent.

One way to solve women's problems is to have a fair proportion of women in the elected bodies. In Panchayats and Municipalities, one-third of seats in local government bodies are reserved for women. Now there are more than 10 lakh elected women representatives in rural and urban local bodies. Gender division is an example that some form of social division needs to be expressed in politics. This also shows that disadvantaged groups do benefit when social divisions become a political issue.

Religion, Communalism and Politics

Religion

The division based on religious differences is often expressed in the field of politics. In India, there are followers of different religions. People should be able to express in politics their needs, interests and demands as a member of a religious community.

Communalism

The use of religion in politics is called communal politics:

1. When beliefs of one religion are presented as superior to those of other religions
2. When the demands of one religious group are formed in opposition to another
3. When state power is used to establish the domination of one religious group over the rest.

Communalism can take various forms in politics, as mentioned below:

1. The most common expression of communalism is in everyday beliefs that involve religious prejudices, stereotypes of religious communities and belief in the superiority of one's religion over other religions.
2. A communal mind often leads to a quest for political dominance of one's own religious community.
3. Political mobilisation on religious lines involves the use of sacred symbols, religious leaders, emotional appeal and plain fear in order to bring the followers of one religion together in the political arena.
4. Sometimes communalism takes its ugly form of communal violence, riots and massacre. India and Pakistan suffered some of the worst communal riots at the time of the Partition.

Secular State

India is a secular state. Some of the features of India's Secular states are:

1. There is no official religion in the Indian state.
2. The Constitution provides to all individuals and communities the freedom to profess, practice and propagate any religion or not to follow any.
3. The Constitution prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion.
4. The Constitution allows the state to intervene in matters of religion in order to ensure equality within religious communities. For example, it bans untouchability.

Caste and Politics

Caste and politics both have some positive and some negative aspects. Let's look at them:

Caste Inequalities

In most societies, occupations are passed on from one generation to another. The caste system is an extreme form of this. In this system, members of the same caste group were supposed to form a social community that practised the same or similar occupation, married within the caste group and did not eat with members from other caste groups.

With economic development, large-scale urbanisation, growth of literacy and education, occupational mobility and the weakening of the position of landlords in the villages, the old notions of Caste Hierarchy are breaking down. The Constitution of India prohibited any caste-based discrimination and laid the foundations of policies to reverse the injustices of the caste system.

Caste in Politics

Caste can take various forms in politics:

1. When parties choose their candidate or when governments are formed, political parties usually take care that representatives of different castes and tribes find a place in it.
2. Political parties and candidates in elections make appeals to caste sentiment to win the elections.
3. To gain support, political parties raise caste-based issues during elections to get political support, as the 'one man, one vote' system or adult franchise has made the voter very powerful.
4. Political Parties have made people belonging to lower castes conscious about their rights to vote and their powers.

During elections, caste matters, but it is not everything. There are many other factors that impact the elections. People's assessment of the performance of the government and the popularity rating of the leaders are considered during elections. Just have a look at the below points:

1. Candidates and parties need to win the confidence of more than one caste and community to win elections.
2. No party wins the votes of all the voters of a caste or community.
3. Some voters have more than one candidate from their caste, while many voters have no candidate from their caste.
4. The ruling party and the sitting MP or MLA keep changing whenever fresh elections take place.

Politics in Caste

Politics also influence the caste system and caste identities by bringing them into the political arena. Here are a few points that support this;

1. Each caste group tries to become bigger by incorporating within its neighbouring castes or sub-castes.
2. Various caste groups are formed with other castes or communities, and then they enter into a dialogue and negotiation.
3. New kinds of caste groups have come up in the political arena, like 'backward' and 'forward' caste groups.

Thus, caste plays different kinds of roles in politics. In some cases, caste division leads to tensions, conflict and even violence.

Exercises Page No. 55

1. Mention different aspects of life in which women are discriminated or disadvantaged in India.

Answer.

The women in India are discriminated or disadvantaged in the following ways:

- a. Literacy – The literacy rate for women is 65.46 per cent, against 82.14 per cent for men. This shows that since independence, the gap between the ratio of men and women with respect to literacy still cannot be filled.
- b. Higher education – When you compare the percentage of boys and girls opting for higher studies after school, it is lower for girls as they tend to drop out after schools. This is because parents do not wish to spend their resources on a girl's education, which is quite expected in boys' cases.
- c. Highly paid jobs – The percentage of women working in high-paying jobs is still smaller than that of men. On an average, an Indian woman works one hour more than an average man every day. Yet, much of her work is not paid and therefore often not valued.
- d. The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 states that equal wages should be paid for equal work. However, in almost all areas of work, from sports and cinema to factories and fields, women are paid less than men, even when both do exactly the same work.
- e. Sex-ratio – Sex Ratio of India is 107.48, i.e., 107.48 males per 100 females in 2019.

2. State different forms of communal politics with one example each.

Answer.

The different forms of communal politics are:

- a. Communalism takes the form of religious prejudices, stereotypes of religious communities and a belief in the superiority of one's religion over other religions. E.g., militant religious groups.
- b. The quest for political dominance of one religion over another in a community. It takes a form of majoritarianism. For example, rift between political parties based on religion.
- c. Political mobilisation on religious lines is another frequent form of communalism. Example – During elections, hate speeches come to the surface, revealing the communalism.
- d. Communal violence is another form of communalism in politics. For example, riots on the basis of religious sentiments.

3. State how caste inequalities are still continuing in India.

Answer.

According to the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), the following evidence reflects the present caste inequalities in India:

- a. The average economic status (measured by criteria like monthly consumption expenditure) of caste groups still follows the old hierarchy – the 'upper' castes are best off, the Dalits and Adivasis are worse off, and the backward classes are in between.
- b. Although every caste has some poor members, the proportion living in extreme poverty (below the official 'poverty line') is much higher for the lowest castes and much lower for the upper castes, with the backward classes once again in between.

4. State two reasons to say that caste alone cannot determine election results in India.

Answer.

The two reasons that say that caste alone cannot determine election results in India are as follows:

- a. In India, no parliamentary constituency has a clear majority of one single caste. So, every candidate and party needs to win the confidence of more than one caste and community to win elections.
- b. No party wins the votes of all the voters of caste or community. When people say that caste is a 'vote bank' of one party, it usually means that a large proportion of the voters from that caste vote for that party.

5. What is the status of women's representation in India's legislative bodies?

Answer.

There are more than 10 lakh elected women representatives in rural and urban local bodies. Women's organisations and activists have been demanding a similar reservation of at least one-third of seats in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies for women. A bill with this proposal has been pending before the Parliament for more than a decade. But there is no consensus over this issue among all the political parties. The bill has not been passed.

6. Mention any two constitutional provisions that make India a secular state.

Answer.

- a. The fundamental right to the freedom of religion clearly states that one has a right to practise, profess and propagate any religion.
- b. Prohibition of discrimination on the basis of religion is one of the tenets of the constitution under the fundamental right to equality.

7. When we speak of gender divisions, we usually refer to:

- a. **Biological differences between men and women**
- b. **Unequal roles assigned by society to men and women**
- c. **Unequal child sex ratio**
- d. **Absence of voting rights for women in democracies**

Answer.

(b) Unequal roles assigned by society to men and women

8. In India, seats are reserved for women in

- a. **Lok Sabha**
- b. **State legislative assemblies**
- c. **Cabinets**
- d. **Panchayati Raj bodies**

Answer.

(d) Panchayati Raj bodies

9. Consider the following statements on the meaning of communal politics. Communal politics is based on the belief that:

- A. **One religion is superior to that of others.**
 - B. **People belonging to different religions can live together happily as equal citizens.**
 - C. **Followers of a particular religion constitute one community.**
 - D. **State power cannot be used to establish the domination of one religious group over others.**
- Which of the statements is/are correct?**

- a. **A, B, C, and D**
- b. **A, B, and D**
- c. **A and C**
- d. **B and D**

Answer.

(c) A and C

10. Which among the following statements about India's Constitution is wrong? It

- a. **prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion.**
- b. **gives official status to one religion.**
- c. **provides to all individuals freedom to profess any religion.**
- d. **ensures equality of citizens within religious communities.**

Answer.

(b) gives official status to one religion.

11. Social divisions based on _____ are peculiar to India.

Answer.

Social divisions based on **caste** are peculiar to India.

12. Match List-I with List-II and select the correct answer using the codes given below the Lists:

	List I	List II
1.	A person who believes in equal rights and opportunities for women and men	A. Communalist
2.	A person who says that religion is the principal basis of community	B. Feminist
3.	A person who thinks that caste is the principal basis of community	C. Secularist
4.	A person who does not discriminate others on the basis of religious beliefs	D. Castiest

	1	2	3	4
(a)	B	C	A	D
(b)	B	A	D	C
(c)	D	C	A	B
(d)	C	A	B	D

Answer.

(b)	B	A	D	C
-----	---	---	---	---

Gender, Religion and Caste Summary

Chapter 4 of **NCERT Social Science Civics** textbook – Democratic Politics-II will introduce students to social divisions in the country based on gender, religion and caste. How social differences based on these three fragments affect the politics of the country will be discussed. Students will learn about gender equality, inequality, communal differences and also how government works to fill the gaps through constitutional provisions.

The students will also get to know about the following topics:

1. **Gender and politics**
 - a. Public/private division
 - b. Women's political representation
2. **Religion, communalism and politics**
 - a. Communalism
 - b. Secular state
3. **Caste and politics**
 - a. Caste inequalities
 - b. Caste in politics
 - c. Politics in caste