

Social Studies

(Civics)

Chapter 4: Gender, Religion and Caste



Gender, Religion and Caste

In India, gender, religion and caste differences are the three biggest issues which have challenged social equality.

Gender Politics

Gender differences assume the following forms in India:

- There is sexual division of work in our society. While office work and high-paid jobs are considered men's domain in India, household work such as washing, cooking and tailoring are done by women.
- It is only when these forms of work become paid jobs do men readily accept them; for example, chefs. Even women work outside their homes; for example, they plough the fields in villages, fetch water etc., but again, these forms of work are neither valued nor acknowledged.
- Although women constitute fifty percent of society, they do not enjoy equal power with men. Women had to struggle hard to gain voting and other democratic rights in many countries. While women in Scandinavian countries such as Finland and Norway actively participate in public life, women in India are far behind men in many spheres.
- Indian society is a patriarchal society; it is dominated by men.
- The literacy rate is only 54% for women compared to 76% for men. At the school level, although girls perform better than boys, they drop out during higher education as parents prefer to spend money on educating boys.
- Only few women are currently working in highly paid jobs. Although the Equal Wages Act lays down that equal wages should be given to both men and women for the same work, women are still paid less than men.
- As the Indian society is patriarchal, many girls are aborted, resulting in a decline in the child sex ratio. The child sex ratio is the number of girl child per thousand boys.
- Domestic violence against women and the physical and mental harassment of women at the office place are some issues which most women face in the country.

Political Representation of Women

It has to be realised that until women get an adequate representation in the legislatures of their countries, their conditions will not improve. Institutions such as the Panchayati Raj have reserved one-third of their seats for women. Many women's organisations are also demanding reservation of one-third of seats in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies. This bill however has not been passed.

Women's political participation has been significantly lower than men's across the globe. Women's well-being can be improved by providing them political power and placing them in decision-making and law-making roles in society. When women gain power, they will devote their efforts to meeting women's demands and finding answers to their challenges.

- Women's political participation in India is lower than the global average. In India, women make up about 10% of legislators, compared to 19% globally.
- In India, women are underrepresented in state legislatures. Only roughly 5% of the population.
- The Panchayati Raj Act mandates that women candidates be given 1/3 of all seats in local bodies. Women's participation in municipalities and panchayats has increased as a result of this.
- However, attempts to introduce such legislation in the Lok Sabha and various state legislatures have failed. The law was never passed because political parties were unable to reach an agreement on it.

Religion, Communalism and Politics

Religion: Religious divisions frequently manifest themselves in the realm of politics. There are people who follow several religions in India. As members of a religious community, people should be able to express their needs, interests, and demands in politics.

Family Law: These are the laws that govern family-related issues such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, and adoption, etc. Different family laws apply to people of various religions in our country.

Communalism

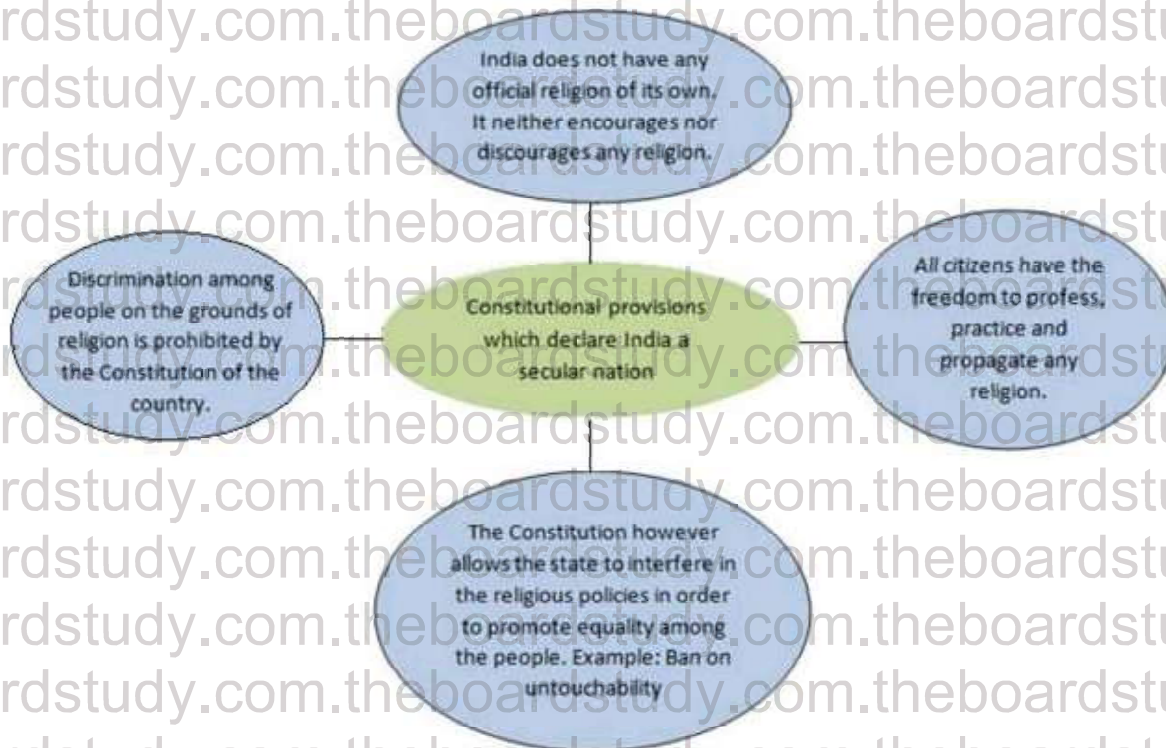
Communalism is one of the major problems faced by our country currently. Communalism becomes a problem when

- Religious fanaticism reaches its height and religion becomes more important than the interests of the wider society or a nation
 - One religious community is pitted against the other religious community
 - Beliefs of one religion is regarded as superior to the other religion
 - Religion becomes an inseparable part of politics; the state power is used to emphasise superiority and domination of one religion over the other
 - In politics, communalism can acquire various forms. These are
 1. When religious beliefs of a person involve prejudices and stereotypes, claiming one religion's ideas to be superior than another.
 2. When a majority community tries to establish its domination over the other communities with the help of the state. Minority communities under such circumstances, retaliates by demanding the formation of separate state for them.
- Political mobilisation on religious lines occurs when religious symbols and leaders make an emotional appeal to the people in order to bring the members of a particular community together.

3. Communal violence is the worst form of communalism. It acquires the political form when it is sponsored by the state.

A Secular State - India

The framers of our Constitution declared India as a secular state. The Constitution of our country declares India as a secular state. This is reflected in many constitutional provisions.



Caste and Politics

The caste system has been an integral part of Indian society since ancient times. It is based on the occupations of the people which are hereditary. People belonging to the lower caste are considered outcastes and untouchables. We find that caste inequalities are breaking down because of the following reasons:

- Development of urban centres
- Weakening of the position of the landlords
- Occupation mobility
- Economic growth and development

However, the caste system has not disappeared from the country altogether. It still exists in most rural societies and to some extent in urban societies. The caste system takes the following forms in politics:

- While choosing candidates for contesting the elections, the caste composition of the electorate is always kept in mind. This is done to win the support of the people for a

candidate belonging to a particular caste.

- When forming the Government, political parties try to include representatives of different castes and tribes.
- Political parties appeal to the caste sentiments of the people to help their candidates to win the elections.

Caste Inequalities: Occupation is typically passed down from generation to generation in most countries. This is taken to its logical conclusion in the caste system. Members of the same caste were intended to establish a social community that practiced the same or comparable occupations, married within the caste group, and did not eat with members of other caste groups, according to this system.

The traditional conceptions of Caste Hierarchy are crumbling as a result of economic progress, large-scale urbanization, increased literacy and education, job mobility, and the weakening of the status of landowners in communities. The Indian Constitution outlawed caste-based discrimination and set the groundwork for policies to correct the system's inequities.

Caste in Politics

However, we also need to keep in mind that the caste system always does not play a role in shaping politics or deciding the candidates from a constituency. This is due to the following reasons:

- Not every constituency in the country has a clear majority of one single caste. Therefore, every party is required to win the trust of the people belonging to different castes.
- No political party wins all the votes of a particular favoured caste or community. When people say that caste is a 'vote bank', they simply mean that many people from that one particular caste may vote for the party.
- Because several political parties fight elections, there may be many candidates from the same caste fighting elections against each other.
- It has been seen that many elected MPs or MLAs may lose the elections. If candidates are elected on caste lines, then no candidate can ever lose the elections.

Politics in Caste

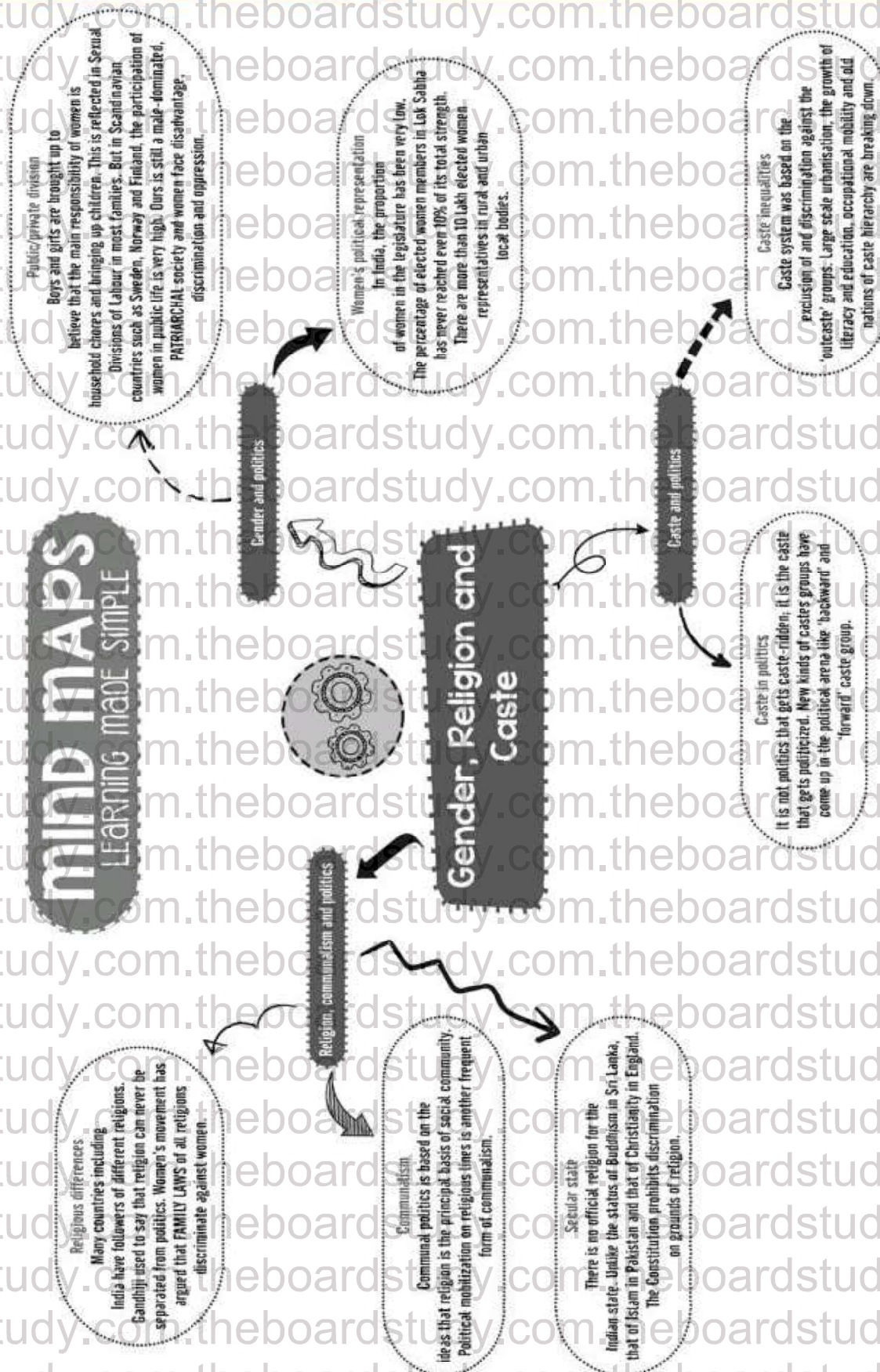
The caste system in India can also become politicised in the following ways:

- When a particular caste tries to gain prominence by adding many neighbouring castes and sub-castes which were earlier not included.
- The caste system also becomes politicised when caste groups are required to enter into a coalition with other castes. In such a case, every caste tries to gain maximum benefits for itself.

- It is to be noticed that the existence of the caste system is itself not healthy for any democracy. It mostly produces negative results. In India, it has resulted in the vicious circle of poverty, unemployment and illiteracy for many castes. The caste system may also lead to caste division, caste violence and conflicts resulting in violence.



GENDER, RELIGION AND CASTE

MIND MAPS
LEARNING MADE SIMPLE

Important Questions

Multiple Choice questions-

1. 'Feminist movements' are aimed at: [CBSE 2011]

- (a) Liberty
- (b) Equality
- (c) Participation
- (d) Power

2. Which one of the following is not a cause of communalism? [CBSE 2011]

- (a) Religion is taken as the basis of the nation
- (b) When one religion is discriminated against other
- (c) State has no official religion
- (d) Demands of one religious group are formed in opposition to another

3. Which of the following divisions is unique to India? [CBSE 2011]

- (a) Gender division
- (b) Caste division
- (c) Economic division
- (d) Religious division

4. Select the laws enacted by the Parliament for the welfare of women.

- (a) Special Marriage Act of 1955
- (b) Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961
- (c) Equal Remuneration Act of 1976
- (d) All the above

5. Women in India are discriminated in;

- (a) Political life
- (b) Social life
- (c) Economic life
- (d) All of the above

6. "Sexual Division of labour signifies, that

- (i) Gender division emphasises division on the basis of nature of work.
- (ii) Division between men and women.
- (iii) Caste is the basis of Gender Division.
- (iv) Work decides the division between men and women.

(a) (i), (iii) and (iv)

(b) (i), (ii) and (z'v)

(c) (i) and (iii)

(d) (iv) and (i)

7. In local self-government institutions, atleast one third of all positions are reserved for: [CBSE 2011]

(a) men

(b) women

(c) children

(d) scheduled tribes

8. "A woman or a man who believes in equal rights and opportunities for men and women." Select the correct option for the definition.

(a) Feminist

(b) Patriarchy

(c) Caste hierarchy

(d) Social change

9. 'Equal Wages Act' signifies;

(a) Law that deals with family related matters.

(b) Law provides that equal wages should be paid for equal job for both men and women.

(c) An Act which signifies that all work inside the home is done by the women of the family.

(d) A radical law against the discriminatory attitude and sexual division of labour.

10. Which leaders worked for the elimination of caste system in India?

(a) Jotiba Phule, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Mahatma Gandhi and Periyar Ram as warn i Naicker

(b) Raja Ram Mohun Roy, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi

(c) Jotiba Phule, Periyar Ramaswami Naicker and Mahatma Gandhi

(d) Swami Vivekanand, Jotiba Phule and Raja Ram Mohan Roy

11. Among the following, which countries have high participation of women in public life?

(a) Sweden and India

(b) Norway and Sri Lanka

(c) Nepal and Finland

(d) Sweden and Africa

12. The distinguishing feature of communalism is:

(a) Followers of a particular religion must belong to one community.

(b) Communalism leads to the belief that people belonging to different religions can live as equal citizens within one nation.

(c) A communal mind does not lead to quest for political dominance of one's own religious community.

(d) A secular constitution is sufficient combat communalism.

13. Identify the statements which suggest that it is not politics that gets caste-ridden, it is the caste that gets politicised.

A. When governments are formed, political parties take care that representatives of different castes find a place in it.

B. Each caste group incorporates neighbouring castes which were earlier excluded.

C. Various caste groups enter into a coalition with other castes.

D. Political parties and candidates in elections make appeals to caste sentiments.

(a) A, B and D

(b) B, C and D

(c) B and C

(d) A and D

14. Identify two reasons that state that caste alone cannot determine elections in India.

A. No party wins the votes of all the voters of a caste or community.

B. Some political parties are known to favour some castes and are seen as their representatives.

C. No parliamentary constituency in the country has a clear majority of one single caste.

D. Mobilising and securing political support has brought new consciousness among the lower castes.

(a) A and C

(b) A and D

(c) B and C

(d) B and D

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

(a) Biological difference between men and women

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

(c) Unequal child sex ratio

(d) Absence of voting rights for women in democracies.

Very Short -

1. State the definition of Feminist.
2. What is child sex ratio?
3. What is sex ratio?
4. What is the percentage of women in Lok Sabha as recommended by women's Reservation Bill?
5. What is caste Hierarchy?
6. What does the concept of majoritarian dominance refers to?
7. What equal wages act signifies?
8. Name any two laws that enacted by the Indian parliament for the welfare of women.
9. Name the leaders who worked for the elimination of caste system?
10. In which countries women are given high profile?

Short Questions-

1. What do you mean by gender division? How is it linked with division of Labour in most of the societies?
2. Give three ill-effects of communalism in the society.
3. Which factors are responsible for miserable and poor conditions of women in India? Explain.
4. Write two positive and two negative impacts each of caste-politics relation in India.
5. Explain the political considerations of democracy.
6. Explain the social considerations of democracy.
7. Explain the economic considerations of democracy.
8. How have the feminist movements helped in improving women's conditions?
9. What is casteism? How casteism in India different as compared to other society?
10. What are the feminist Movements? What are their demands?

Long Questions-

1. What is communalism? What are the major beliefs of communal people?
2. In actual life democracy do not appear to be very successful in reducing economic inequalities explain by giving examples.
3. Examine the basic features of the caste system prevailing in India.
4. Assess the influences of politics on caste system.
5. How Casteism is dangerous a democratic country?

6. Is caste system is coming to an end? Explain.
7. Explain the status of women's representation in India's legislative bodies.
8. How does communalism threaten the Indian Democracy? Explain.

Assertion and Reason Questions-

1. In these questions, a statement of assertion followed by a statement of reason is given. Choose the correct answer out of the following choices.

- a) Assertion and reason both are correct statements and reason is correct explanation for assertion.
- b) Assertion and reason both are correct statements but reason is not correct explanation for assertion.
- c) Assertion is correct statement, but reason is wrong statement.
- d) Both assertion and reason are wrong statements.

Assertion (A): Sex-selective abortion led to decline of sex ratio in India. **Reason (R):** Desire of for a male child makes Indian families abort girl.

Reason (R): Desire of for a male child makes Indian families abort girl.

2. In these questions, a statement of assertion followed by a statement of reason is given. Choose the correct answer out of the following choices.

- a) Assertion and reason both are correct statements and reason is correct explanation for assertion.
- b) Assertion and reason both are correct statements but reason is not correct explanation for assertion.
- c) Assertion is correct statement but reason is wrong statement.
- d) Both assertion and reason are wrong statements.

Assertion (A): Neglect of our environment has led to the destruction and extinction of many species of animals and plant life.

Reason (R): Decreasing Forest cover area is a major reason of destruction of species.

MCQ Answers-

1. Answer: b
2. Answer: c
3. Answer: b
4. Answer: d
5. Answer: d
6. Answer: b
7. Answer: b

8. Answer: a

9. Answer: b

10. Answer: a

11. Answer: d

12. Answer: a

13. Answer: c

14. Answer: a

15. Answer: b

Very Short Answers-

1. Ans. A woman or a man who believe in equal rights and opportunities for women and men.
2. Ans. The number of girl children per 1000 boys.
3. Ans. It is the number of females per thousand males in a country.
4. Ans. 33 percent.
5. Ans. It is a ladder like formation in which all the caste groups are placed from the highest to the lowest caste.
6. Ans. It refers to the community belonging to a majority category takes the status of majoritarian dominance.
7. Ans. The law provides that equal wages should be paid for equal job for both men and women.
8. Ans. Special Marriage Act of 1955 and Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961.
9. Ans. Jotiba Phule, Mahatma Gandhi and Dr B. R. Ambedkar.
10. Ans. Scandinavian Countries- Sweden, Norway and Denmark.

Short Answers-

1. Ans. Gender division simply refers to the division of work between the men and the women. Some work especially the households such as cooking, washing, cleaning, etc. are exclusively meant for the women while the men have some other defined areas of work.

(1) The gender division between the men and women does not mean that men cannot do house hold works. They simply think that it is for women to attend the household works.

(2) The gender division also doesn't mean that women do not work outside their home.

2. Ans.

(1) A communal thought always tends to establish political dominance over particular religious community.

(2) The country weakens when political parties are formed and political activities are conducted on the communal lines.

(3) One of the most ugly face of communalism emerges out in the form of riots, violence and homicides.

3. Ans.

(1) Sexual division of Labour.

(2) Illiteracy

(3) Lack of Representation in politics.

(4) Discrimination in Job.

4. Ans.

(1) Positive Impacts

(i) Caste Politics relationship has helped people from Dalits and OBCs to gain better access to decision making.

(ii) Now people are making voice for the end of discrimination against particular castes for more dignity and more access to land, other resources and opportunities.

(2) Negative Impacts

(i) It can divert attention from other pressing issues like poverty, development and corruption. Sometimes a few underprivileged castes get more benefit while other underprivileged classes remain deprived.

(ii) Sometimes it also disrupts social harmony.

5. Ans.

1. Elections should be held regularly and there should be more than one party in the elections.

2. Elections should be held on the basis of universal adult franchise, which means every adult member has the right to vote.

Citizens are participating in the political affairs of the government.

6. Ans.

1) Social democracy means there should be equality and unity among the society.

2) Everyone should have equal access to the resources of the society.

3) There should not be any discrimination on the basis of caste, race, gender or religion.

4) No religion or community is given any preference over other religions and communities.

7. Ans.

1) Economic democracy means that every member enjoys, more or less, equal economic status.

- 2) This means that there should not be large gaps between the rich and the poor.
- 3) A society should not have a small very rich class and a large poor class.
- 4) It also means that the government undertakes extensive social welfare schemes and achieve universal literacy rate.

8. Ans.

- 1) Political expression of gender division and mobilization on this question helped to improve the women's role in public life.
- 2) Now women are working in different occupations such as scientists, doctors, engineering, lawyers, teachers which were not considered suitable for women.
- 3) In some parts of the world for example in Scandinavian countries such as Sweden, Norway and Finland the participation of women in public life is very high.

9. Ans.

- 1) Organisation of people into social groups for the purpose of marriage, work and diet is known as caste system.
- 2) The social structure of India is based upon the caste system.
- 3) All societies have some kind of social inequalities and some form of division of labor but the Indian caste system is an extreme form of division of labour based on birth.

10. Ans.

- 1) These are the movements which are organized by various women organizations to create equality for women in personal and family life.
- 2) These feminist movements demand equal rights for women in all spheres of life.
- 3) These are agitations in different countries for the extension of voting rights to women.

The agitations demanded enhancing the political and legal status of women.

Long Answers-

1. Ans.

- 1) Communalism is a situation when a particular community tries to promote its own interests at the cost of other communities.
- 2) Communal politics is based on the idea that religion is the principal basis of social community.
- 3) The followers of a particular religion must belong to one community. Their fundamental interests should be the same. Any difference that they may have, that is irrelevant.
- 4) Communalism also includes that people who follow different religions have some commonalities. These are superficial and immaterial. Their interests are bound to be different and involve a conflict.

5) Sometimes communalism leads to the belief that people belonging to different religions cannot live as equal citizens within one nation.

2. Ans.

- 1) In most of the democracies a small number of ultra rich enjoy a highly disproportionate share of wealth and income.
- 2) The share of rich class is increases whereas those who are not at bottom of the society have been little to depend upon.
- 3) Even in India, the poor constitute a large proportion of our voters and no party will like to lose their votes. Yet democratically elected government does not appear to be as keen to address the question of poverty as is expected.
- 4) The situation is much worse in some other countries. In Bangladesh more than half of its population lives in poverty. People in several poor countries are now dependent on the rich countries even for the food supplies

3. Ans.

- 1) The association of political parties with social groups is not always bad.
- 2) Associations of political parties with weaker section of society are healthy for democracy.
- 3) Through political parties weaker sections get together to voice their opinion and get a chance for their betterment.
- 4) Some political parties grow out of social groups, example DMK, AIADMK.
- 5) It is hierarchical occupational division of the society.
- 6) It has four main divisions- Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vashyas and Shudras.
- 7) It is hereditary.
- 8) The members of the same caste group formed a social community that followed similar occupations, married within the caste and did not mingle with the other caste.
- 9) The caste system was based on exclusion of and discrimination against the 'out caste' groups that were subjected to inhuman practice of untouchability.

4. Ans.

- 1) Each caste group tries to become bigger by incorporating within its sub castes.
- 2) Various caste groups are required to enter into a coalition with other castes or communities.
- 3) New kinds of caste groups have entered politics like backward and forward castes.
- 4) Politics in caste has allowed many disadvantaged caste groups to demand their share of power.
- 5) Caste politics has helped the Dalits and OBCs to gain better access to decision

making.

5. Ans.

- 1) Casteism is actually against the basis principal of democracy that i.e., liberty, equality and fraternity.
- 2) Casteism gives encouragement to vote bank politics and because of which economic based issues are pushed back by the leaders of differ castes.
- 3) Casteism encourages interest of castes and is against national unity.
- 4) Casteism favours interests of one particular caste because of which interest of other castes are overlooked.

6. Ans. Caste system has kept Indian society intact. But at present it is coming to an end because of following reasons:

- 1) Many social reform movements were started in 19th century like Brahma Samaj, Arya Samaj etc. They preached against the caste system.
- 2) With the advent of means of transport and communication people begin to move from place to place in search of work and in new society. There they work with people of other castes. It leads to decline of another feature of keeping relations with one's own caste.
- 3) In the past religious education was given and it was confined only to higher three castes. But with the changing time religious education came to an end.
- 4) Every one begins to get modern education which led to the decline of discrimination.
- 5) Giving occupation to the child is one of the main features of caste system. But due to industrialization and modernization new occupations came into being. People begin to adopt new occupations which have led to the end of this feature of caste system.

7. Ans.

- 1) In the central legislature there are less than 10% of its total strength are women.
- 2) In the state legislature there are less than 5% of its total strength are women.
- 3) In panchayat 1/3 seats are reserved for women.
- 4) India is among the bottom group of nations in the world, in this respect.
- 5) Women' organizations and activists have been demanding a similar reservation of at least 1/3 of seats in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies. But the bill to this effect has not been passed.

8. Ans.

- 1) Communalism involves religious prejudice, 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 mobilization on religious lines is another frequent form of communalism. In electoral politics, this often involves special appeal to the interests or emotions of votes of one religion in preference to others.
- 4) Sometimes communalism in India takes its most ugly form of communal violence, riots and massacre.
- 5) Communal prejudice and propaganda need to be countered in everyday life and religion based mobilization needs to be countered in the arena of politics.

Assertion and Reason Answers-

1. a) Assertion and reason both are correct statements and reason is correct explanation for assertion.

Explanation: Sex-selective abortion led to decline of sex ratio in India. Indian parents want to have son and want ways to abort girl child. However, sex-selective abortion is immoral and legally banned in India. The reason thus explains the assertion.

2. c) Assertion is correct statement, but reason is wrong statement.

Explanation: Universal Adult Franchise gives right to vote to everyone irrespective of caste, religion, colour or gender. It is based on the principle of equality. Right to vote should be given to everyone because that is the whole essence of a democracy, equal representation. Class cannot determine wisdom.