**GENDER, RELIGION AND CASTE**

**Question-1**  
Mention different aspects of life in which women are discriminated or disadvantaged in India.  
**Solution:**  
Family laws of all religions discriminate against women.  
There are reports of various kinds of harassment, exploitation and violence against women. Urban areas have become particularly unsafe for women.

In India, the proportion of women in legislature has been very low. For example, the percentage of elected women members in Lok Sabha has never reached even 10 per cent of its total strength. Their share in the state assemblies is less than 5 per cent. In this respect, India is among the bottom group of nations in the world.

**Question-2**  
State different forms of communal politics with one example each.  
**Solution:**  
**Different forms of communal politics are as given below:**

1. **Everyday beliefs:** Religious prejudices, stereotypes of religious communities, and belief in the superiority of one’s religion over other religions are so common that we often fail to notice them even when we believe in it. For example even today the members of lower classes are not allowed to enter the temples in many regions.
2. **Majoritarian dominance:** A majority community tries to dominate other communities in politics. This may compel the minority community to form a separate political unit. For example, in Sri Lanka, majoritarianism has been followed which has resulted in conflict in the country.
3. **Political mobilization on religious lines:** Religious appeals are made to voters to attract their votes. Sometimes sacred symbols and religious leaders are used to bring the followers of one religion together in the political arena. Religious leaders are asked to propagate in favour of a political party. Emotional appeals are made on the basis of religion.
4. **Communal violence:**Sometimes communalism takes the ugliest form of communal violence, riots, and massacre. India and Pakistan suffered some of the worst communal riots at the time of the partition. Even after independence, riots on communal lines have taken place in India

**Question-3**  
State how caste inequalities are still continuing in India.  
**Solution:**  
**Caste inequalities are still continuing in India in the following ways:**

1. Most people still marry within their own caste or tribe. The upper caste people or sometimes other caste people too do not allow inter-caste marriages.
2. Untouchability has been prohibited by the Constitution but in practice, it still exists in different parts of the country, particularly in rural areas.
3. In the field of education too the position is far from satisfactory. The caste groups that had access to education under the old system have done very well in acquiring modern I education as well. But those groups who did not have access to education or were prohibited from acquiring it have naturally lagged behind.
4. Caste is still an important source of economic inequality because it regulates access to  
   resources of various kinds while the upper classes are best off, the Dalits and Adivasis are worst off, and the backward classes are in between.
5. Although every caste has some poor members, the proportion of living in extreme poverty is much higher for the lowest castes.
6. Lower caste people like rural landless labourers, are generally poor and are exploited even today. Caste still continues to be closely linked to economic status. The percentage of the population living below the poverty line between 1999-2000 was 45.8 (STs), 35.9% (SCs), and 27% (OBCs) in rural areas.

**Question-4**  
State two reasons to say that caste alone cannot determine election results in India.  
**Solution:**  
When parties choose candidates in elections, they keep in mind the caste composition of the electorate and nominate candidates from different castes so as to muster necessary support to win elections. When governments are formed, political parties usually take care that representatives of different castes and tribes find a place in it.  
Universal adult franchise and the principle of one-person-one-vote compelled political leaders to gear up to the task of mobilising and securing political support. It also brought new consciousness among the people of castes that were hitherto treated as inferior and low.

**Question-5**  
What is the status of women’s representation in India’s legislative bodies?  
**Solution:**  
**The status of women’s representation in India’s legislative bodies is very less as mentioned  
below :**

1. In Lok Sabha, the percentage of elected women members has never reached even 10 percent of its total strength.
2. Their share in the state assemblies is less than 5 percent. India is among the bottom group of nations in the world in this respect. Women in national parliaments in different regions are as given below :
   * Nordic Countries – 40%
   * America – 20.2%
   * Europe – 19.6%
   * Asia – 16.3%
   * India – 8.3%
   * Arab States – 8.2% 1  
     Thus, India is ahead of Arab states only.
3. Cabinets are also male-dominated even when a woman becomes a Chief Minister or the Prime Minister.
4. Thus the proportion of women in legislative bodies has been very low. Women’s organizations and activists have been demanding 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 due to lack of consensus among the political parties, it has not been passed.

**Question-6**  
Mention any two constitutional provisions that make India a secular state.  
**Solution:**  
There is no official religion for the Indian state. Unlike the status of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, that of Islam in Pakistan and that of Christianity in England, our Constitution does not give a special status to any religion.  
The Constitution provides to all individuals and communities freedom to profess, practice and propagate any religion, or not to follow any.

**Multiple Choice Questions**

**Previous Years’ Questions**  
1. In local self-government institutions atleast one-third of all positions are reserved for:   
(a) men  
(b) women  
(c) children  
(d) scheduled tribes

2.**‘Feminist movements’** are aimed at:   
(a) Liberty  
(b) Equality  
(c) Participation  
(d) Power

3. According to 2001 census what was the sex ratio in India?  
(a) 1000 males 950 females  
(b) 1000 males 850 Females  
(c) 1000 males 927 females  
(d) 1000 males 922 females

4. Which one of the following is not a cause of communalism?  
(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.

5. Which of the following divisions is unique to India?  
(a) Gender division  
(b) Caste division  
(c) Economic division  
(d) Religious division

6. 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

7. In India seats are reserved for women in  
(a) LokSabha  
(b) State legislative assemblies  
(c) Cabinets  
(d) Panchayati Raj bodies

8. Consider the following statements on the meaning of communal politics. Communal politics is based on the belief that:  
(i) One religion is superior to that of others.  
(ii) People belonging to different religions can live together happily as equal citizens.  
(iii) Followers of a particular religion constitute one community.  
(iv) State power cannot be used to establish the domination of one religious group over others.  
Which of the statements are correct?  
(a) (i), (ii), (iii) and (iv)  
(b) (i), (ii) and (iv)  
(c) (i) and (iii) only  
(d) (ii) and (iv) only.

9. 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 the equality of citizens within religious communities.

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

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **List I** | **List II** |
| (i) A person who believes | A. Communalist in equal rights and opportunities for women and men. |
| (ii) A person who says that | B. Feminist religion is the principal basis of the community. |
| (iii) A person who thinks | C. Secularist that caste is the principal basis of community. |
| (iv) A person who does not | D. Castiest discriminate against others on the basis of religious beliefs. |

(a) (i) – B; (ii) – C; (iii) – A; (iv) – D  
(b) (i) – B; (ii) – A; (iii) – D (iv) – C  
(c) (i) – D; (ii) – C; (iii) – A (iv) – B  
(d) (i) – C; (ii) – A; (iii) – B (iv) – D

**Additional Questions**

11. 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 (iv)  
(c) (i) and (iii) (d) (iv) and (i)

12. Which statement is true for secularism/secular state?  
(a) Recognises every religion and gives due importance to every religion.  
(b) It is based on the idea that religion is the sole basis of the social community.  
(c) Secular state has its official religion.  
(d) No official religion for the secular state.

13. Caste hierarchy means :  
(a) Shift from one occupation to another.  
(b) A ladder-like formation in which all the caste groups are placed from the highest to the lowest castes.  
(c) Religious equality.  
(d) Communal harmony and peace on the basis of caste.

14. “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

15. **“Process to shift from one occupation to another, usually it is being practiced by the new generation.”** It is significant to :  
(a) Social change  
(b) Secular state  
(c) Occupational mobility  
(d) Communal representation

16.**‘Equal Wages Act’** signifies;  
(a) Law that deals with family-related matters.  
(b) Law provides that equal wages should be paid for an 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.

17. Do you think that women could have made the gains if their unequal treatment was not raised in the political domain?  
(a) Yes, because some form of gender division or sexual division needs to be expressed in politics.  
(b) No, gender division should not be expressed in politics.  
(c) No, because unequal treatment requires moral obligation, not the legal one.  
(d) All the above.

18. 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

19. Why did our constitution framers choose the model of a secular state?  
(a) Constitution framers wanted to check religious differences.  
(b) To check casteism  
(c) To check the challenges of communalism  
(d) To check communal politics.

20. Which leaders worked for the elimination of the caste system in India?  
(a) Jotiba Phule, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Mahatma Gandhi, and Periyar Ramaswami 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.

21. In which countries women are given high profile?  
(a) Saudi Arabia, Sweden and Norway  
(b) Sweden, Norway and Finland  
(c) France, Switzerland and Saudi Arabia  
(d) Norway, Finland and Saudi Arabia

22. What is the exact ratic^of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in 2001?  
(a) Scheduled castes constitute 17.8% and scheduled tribes 9.2%.  
(b) Scheduled castes constitute 20.4% and scheduled tribes 8.2%.  
(c) Scheduled castes constitute 15.6% and scheduled tribes 7.8%.  
(d) Scheduled castes constitute 16.2% and scheduled tribes 8.2%.

23. Indicate **‘True’** and **‘False’** for the given statements:  
(a) Feminist means a woman or a man who believes in equal rights and opportunities for women and men.  
(b) Communalism signifies an ideology which stands for regional harmony and economic prosperity.  
(c) Inequality of women states equal treatment to women as compared to men.  
(d) The concept of Patriarchy refers to a system that values men more and gives them power over women.

24. **“India is a country of religious differences.”** Justify the statement by selecting a suitable option.  
(a) of different social groups.  
(b) India is the land of different religions like Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, and Sikhism.  
(c) of different community people.  
(d) of different caste people.

25. Participation of women in public life is relatively low in countries like;  
(a) Norway  
(b) Sweden  
(c) Finland  
(d) Bangladesh

26. Women in India are discriminated in;  
(a) Political life  
(b) Social life  
(c) Economic life  
(d) All the above

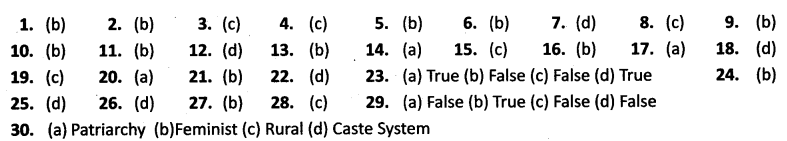
27. Over the past few decades, the sex ratio in India;  
(a) has not changed  
(b) has gone down  
(c) has increased  
(d) has shown a fluctuating trend

28. The peculiarity of social division in India, unlike many other countries, is that it is based on;  
(a) Religion  
(b) Language  
(c) Caste  
(d) Income levels

29. State **True** and **False** :  
(a) Indian Constitution advocates an official language for India.  
(b) Gandhiji used to say that religion can never be separated from politics.  
(c) Communalism signifies an ideology which stands for regional harmony and economic.  
(d) Inequality of women states equal treatment to women as compared to men.

30. Fill in the blanks :  
(a) The concept of …………. refers to a system that values men more and gives them power over women.  
(b) …………… means a woman or man who believes in equal rights and opportunities for women and men.  
(c) Shift from …………….. areas to urban areas is known as occupational mobility.  
(d) ………….. was based on the exclusion of and discrimination against the ‘outcaste’ group.  
(i) Patriarchy / Feminist  
(ii) Feminist / Patriarchy  
(iii) Rural / Urban  
(iv) Caste hierarchy / Caste system

**ANSWERS**

**Multiple Choice Questions**  


 Short Answer Questions (SA) 3 Marks

Question 9.  
Mention any two constitutional provisions that make India a Secular State.  
Answer:  
Two constitutional provisions that make India a Secular State are:

1. There is no official religion for the Indian State. Unlike the status of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, Islam in Pakistan and Christianity in England, our Constitution does not give a special status to any religion.
2. At the same time, the Constitution allows the State to intervene in the matters of religion in order to ensure equality within religious communities; for example, it bans untouchability.

Question   
Suppose a politician seeks your vote on the religious ground. Why is his act considered against the norms of democracy? Explain.   
Answer:  
If a politician seeks votes on religious grounds, he is acting against the norms of democracy because—

1. This act of his is against the Constitution. He is exploiting social differences which may create social discard and lead to social division.
2. Religion becomes a problem when it is expressed in politics and when one religion and its followers are pitted against another.
3. When beliefs of one religion are presented as superior to those of other religions and the demands of one religious group are formed in opposition to another and the state power is used to establish the domination of one religious group over the rest, it leads to communal politics.

Question   
Explain the status of women’s representation in India’s legislative bodies.   
Answer:  
The one way to ensure that women related problems get adequate attention is to have more women as elected representatives. To achieve this, it is legally binding to have a fair proportion of women in the elected bodies.

* Panchayati Raj in India has reserved one-third seats in Local Government bodies for women.
* In India, the proportion of women in legislature has been very low. The percentage of elected women members in Lok Sabha is not even 10 per cent and in State Assemblies less than 5 per cent. India is behind several developing countries of Africa and Latin America. Women organisations have been demanding reservations of at least one-third seats in Lok Sabha and State Assemblies for women.
* And only recently, in March 2010, the women’s reservation bill was passed in the Rajya Sabha ensuring 33% reservation to women in Parliament and State Legislative bodies.

Question   
How does religion influence the political set up in our country? Explain.   
Answer:  
Gandhiji said, “Religion can never be separated from politics”. By religion he did not mean any particular religion like Hinduism or Islam, but moral values and ethics drawn from religion to guide politics. Religion in politics is not as dangerous as it may seem to us. Ethical values of each religion can play a major role in politics. According to human rights groups, most of the victims of communal riots in our country are from religious minorities.

Government can take special steps to protect them. Family laws of all religions discriminate against women. The government can change laws to make them more equitable. These instances show a relationship between religion and politics. People should be able to express in politics their needs, interests and demands as members of a religious community. Thus, it is the responsibility of those whose political power is able to regulate the practice of religion, to prevent discrimination and oppression. These political acts are not wrong as long as they treat every religion equally.

Long Answer Questions (LA)

Question   
“Gender division is not based on Biology but on social expectations and stereotypes’. Support the statement.   
Or  
Mention different aspects of life in which women are discriminated against or disadvantaged in India.  
Answer:  
‘Gender division is not based on Biology but on social expectations and stereotypes’:

1. Boys and girls are brought up to believe that the main responsibility of women is house work and bringing up children. There is sexual division of labour in most families where women stay at home and men work outside to play the role of breadwinners.
2. Literacy rate among women is only 54% in comparison to 76% among men. In studies, girls mostly perform better than boys, but they drop out simply because parents prefer to spend their resources on their sons’ education. A smaller proportion of girls go for higher studies.
3. On an average, a woman works more than an average man everyday. Since much of her work is not paid for, therefore often not valued. The Equal Wages Act provides for equal wages for equal work, but in almost all areas of work from sports to cinema, from factories to fields, women are comparatively paid less because of the male chauvinistic bent of mind of society.
4. Child sex-ratio (number of girl children per thousand boys) is very low. In India, the national average is 927. In some places it is even lower because parents prefer to have sons so they get girl child aborted.
5. In urban areas too, women are not respected and are unsafe even in their homes being subjected to beating, harassment and other forms of domestic violence.
6. The role of women in politics in most societies is minimal.

Question  
State how caste inequalities are still continuing in India.  
Answer:  
Caste has not disappeared from contemporary India and caste division is special to India. Some of the older aspects of caste persist even today.

1. Even now most people marry within their own caste.
2. Untouchability has not ended completely despite constitutional prohibition.
3. Effects of centuries of advantages and disadvantages can be felt today. The caste groups that had access to education under old system have done well, whereas those groups that did not have access to education have lagged behind.
4. There is a large presence of ‘upper caste’ among the urban middle classes in our country.
5. Caste continues to be linked to economic status as is evident from National Sample Survey:
   * The average economic status of caste groups still follows the old hierarchy
   * the ‘upper’ castes are best off, the Dalits and Adivasis are worst off and the backward classes are in between.
   * Although every caste has some poor members, the proportion of those living in extreme poverty is higher for lowest castes and much lower for the upper castes.
   * Similarly, every caste has some members who are rich. The upper castes are heavily over-represented among the rich while the lower castes are under-represented.
   * The SC, ST and OBC together account for about two-thirds of India’s population.

Question  
What factors have brought about a change in the Indian Caste system in modern times? Explain.   
Answer:  
The castes and caste system in modern India have undergone great changes due to the efforts of social reformers and the socio-economic changes in India. With economic development, large scale urbanisation, growth of literacy and education, occupational mobility and weakening of the position of landlords in the villages, the old notions of caste hierarchy are breaking down. Politics too influences the caste system and caste identities by bringing them into the political arena. The Constitution of India prohibits any caste-based discrimination and has laid foundations of policies to reverse injustices of the caste system.

Question   
Explain the various forms that caste can take in politics.  
Answer:  
Various forms of caste in politics:

1. When governments are formed, political parties usually take care that representatives of different castes and tribes find a place in it.
2. When parties choose candidates, they keep in mind the composition of the electorate and accordingly choose candidates from different castes so as to muster necessary support to win elections.
3. Political parties make appeals to caste sentiments to gain support. Some political parties are known to favour some castes.
4. Universal adult franchise and the principle of one-person-one-vote compelled political leaders to mobilise political support. It also brought new consciousness among people belonging to those castes which were treated as inferiors.

Question   
What was the Feminist Movement? Explain the political demands of the Feminist Movement in India.   
Answer:  
Feminist Movements are radical women’s movements aiming at attaining equality for women in personal and family life and public affairs. These movements have organised and agitated to raise channels for enhancing the political and legal status of women and improving their educational and career opportunities.

Political demands of the feminist movement in India:  
The one way to ensure that women related problems get adequate attention in India is to have more women as elected representatives. To achieve this, it is legally binding to have a fair proportion of women in the elected bodies. Panchayati Raj in India has reserved one-third seats in Local Government bodies for women.

In India, the proportion of women in legislature has been very low. The percentage of elected women members in Lok Sabha is not even 10 per cent and in State Assemblies less than 5 per cent. India in behind several developing countries of Africa and Latin America. Women organizations have been demanding reservations of at least one-third seats in Lok Sabha and State Assemblies for women.

And only recently, in March 2010, the women’s reservation bill was passed in the Rajya Sabha ensuring 33 per cent reservation for women in Parliament and State Legislative bodies.

Question   
What have been the consequences of the political expression of gender division in free India?   
Answer:  
Political expression of gender division and political mobilisation has helped improve women’s role in public life all over the world including India. However, despite some improvements since Independence, ours is still a male-dominated society and women lag behind in all fields.

* Literacy rate among women is only 54 per cent as compared with 76 per cent among men.
* Proportion of women among highly paid and valuable jobs in still very small.
* Equal Wages Act provides that equal wages should be paid for equal work. However, in all areas from sports and cinema, factories to fields, women are paid less than men for the same amount of work.
* In many parts of India, parents prefer to have sons and find ways to abort the girl child before she is born.

Question  
Explain the factors that have led to the weakening of the caste system in India.  
Answer:  
Reasons which have contributed to changes in caste system:

1. Efforts of political leaders and social reformers like Gandhiji, B.R. Ambedkar who advocated and worked to establish a society in which caste inequalities are absent.
2. Socio-economic changes such as:
   * urbanisation
   * growth of literacy and education
   * occupational mobility
   * weakening of landlord’s position in the village
   * breaking down of caste hierarchy have greatly contributed.
3. The Constitution of India prohibited any caste-based discrimination and laid the foundations of policies to reverse the injustices of the caste system.
4. Provision of fundamental rights has played a major role because these rights are provided to all citizens without any discrimination.

Question   
How far is it correct to say that it is not politics that gets caste ridden but it is the caste that gets politicised? Explain.   
Answer:  
Politics too influences the caste system and caste identities by bringing them into the political arena. This takes several forms:

1. Each caste group tries to become bigger by incorporating within itself neighbouring castes or sub¬castes.
2. Various caste groups enter into a coalition with other castes for negotiations.
3. New caste groups like ‘backward’ and ‘forward’ have come up in the political arena.
4. Expressions of caste differences in politics give many disadvantaged communities the chance to demand their share of power and thus gain access to decision-making.
5. Many political and non-political organisations have been demanding and agitating for an end to discrimination against particular castes for more dignity and more access to land, resources and opportunities.

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Answer:  
Feminist Movements are radical women’s movements aiming at attaining equality for women in personal and family life and public affairs. These movements have organised and agitated to raise channels for enhancing the political and legal status of women and improving their educational and career opportunities.  
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And only recently, in March 2010, the women’s reservation bill was passed in the Rajya Sabha ensuring 33 per cent reservation to women in Parliament and State Legislative bodies.

Question 22.  
“The Government of India gives holidays for the festivals of most of the religions.” Why is it so? Give your viewpoint. (2015)  
Answer:  
The Government of India gives all religious holidays because India is a secular state.  
Certain provisions were adopted in the Constitution to make India a secular state:

1. There is no official religion for the Indian State. Unlike the status of Buddhism in Sri Lanka and Islam in Pakistan, our Constitution does not give a special status to any religion.
2. The Constitution provides to all individuals and communities freedom to profess, practice and propagate any religion or not to follow any.
3. The Constitution prohibits discrimination on the grounds of religion.
4. Constitution allows the State to intervene in the matters of religion in order to ensure equality within religious communities, for example, it bans untouchability.