

## 3 Gender, Religion and Caste

### Gender Division

- Sexual Division of Labour: A system in which all work inside the home is either done by the women of the family while men are expected to work outside to earn money.
- This belief is not based on biology but on social and expectations and stereotypes.

### Feminist movements

- Social movements that aim at establishing equality between men and women are called feminist movements.

### Women's Oppression in various ways

→ Literacy Rate: The literacy rate among women is only 65.46% compared with 82.14% among men.

→ Jobs: There is very low percentage of women in the high paid and high value jobs as just a few girls are encouraged to take up higher education.

→ Wages: Despite the Equal Wages Act, women in all areas are paid lesser than men, be it sports, cinema, agriculture or construction works.

→ Sex Ratio: Most parents prefer boy children to girl children. Female infanticide and feticide are common in our country. This has resulted in unfavourable sex ratio.

→ Social Evil: Society in general and urban centres in particular, is not safe for women. Dowry harassment, physical abuse, sexual harassment are routine tales.

### Women's political representation

- Political representation of women in India is very low. It has never crossed 5% in any of the Vidhana Sabhas and never crossed 12% in Loka Sabha.

### Religion, Communalism and Politics

#### Religion Differences in Politics

- Human rights activists allege that people from minority religious community suffer a lot whenever there is communal violence.

## **Communalism**

- Extreme and partisan attachment to one's own religion is called Communalism.

### What is Communal Politics?

- Problem in the society begins when one religion is pitted against the others.
- The problem becomes serious when demands of one religious groups is formed in opposition to other religions.
- The problem becomes very acute when the Government uses its power to fulfil the demands of only one religious group.
- This kind of using religion in politics is called Communal Politics.

### The Theory of Communal Politics

- Religion is the main basis of formation of the society.
- The followers of a religion must form one community.
- Their fundamental interests are the same.

### Why is theory of Communal Politics wrong?

- People of the same religion do not have same interest and aspirations in every context.
- Everyone has different identities in different contexts.

### Steps taken to combat communalism

- India is a secular state. There is no official religion or state religion in India.
- Everyone is free to practice, profess and propagate any religion.
- The constitution prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion.

## **Caste and Politics**

### **Caste Inequalities**

- Members of the same caste group formed the social community that practiced the same or similar occupation, married within the caste group, and did not eat with members from other caste groups.

## **Why does caste system still persist?**

- Most people prefer to marry within their own caste or tribe.
- Untouchability has not ended a completely.
- The caste groups that had access to education have continue to do well.

## **How Caste Influences Politics**

- When parties choose candidates in elections, they keep in mind the caste the composition of the constituency.
- Political parties and candidates appealing to the caste sentiment of the people.

## **Caste alone cannot determine Indian Elections**

- No parliamentary constituency in the country has a clear majority of one single caste.
- No party wins the votes of all the voters of a caste our community.
- If that caste group has many to choose from, the other caste groups have none, if they were to vote only on the basis of caste.
- The voter's attachment to his party and the party ideology can be stronger than his attachment to his caste group.

## **The Outcome of Political Expression of Caste**

- It has provided space and opportunity for the disadvantaged groups to demand their share in power.
- It also has helped them to fight for social justice.
- Caste based politics is certainly not healthy in democracy.
- It can divert attention from other important issues like poverty, development and corruption.
- It can also lead to tensions, conflicts and violence.