Class 10 Political Science Chapter 3: Gender, Religion and Caste - Notes, Important Questions and MCQs (2026-27)

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These Gender, Religion and Caste Class 10 notes cover Class 10 Political Science Chapter 3 completely as per the 2026-27 NCERT book: gender and politics (public/private division, feminist movements, discrimination against women, women's political representation and the Women's Reservation Act, 2023), religion, communalism and the secular state, and caste and politics (caste inequalities, caste in politics and politics in caste).

You also get tables on women's disadvantages, forms of communalism, secular provisions and caste-politics interactions, census figures, NCERT-style questions with answers, 10 MCQs and a free PDF with no signup.

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Chapter Overview

The existence of social diversity does not threaten democracy; political expression of social differences is possible and sometimes desirable. This chapter applies this idea to three social differences in India that can become divisions and inequalities: gender, religion and caste.

For each, it examines the nature of the division in India, how it is expressed in politics, and whether that expression is healthy for democracy. Gender is largely a positive example,

Important Topics and Concepts

Gender division and the public/private division

- Gender division is a hierarchical social division seen everywhere but rarely recognised in politics. It is not based on biology but on social expectations and stereotypes.
- Boys and girls are raised to believe women's main responsibility is housework and child-rearing, creating a sexual division of labour: women do work inside the home; men do work outside.
- Men do these jobs when paid (most tailors and hotel cooks are men), and most women also do paid work, but women's work is not valued or recognised.
- As a result, women's role in public life and politics is minimal in most societies, even though they are half of humanity.

Political expression of gender division

- Women in many countries agitated for voting rights and for better political and legal status, education and careers. More radical feminist movements sought equality in personal and family life.
- Political mobilisation improved women's role in public life: women now work as scientists, doctors, engineers, lawyers, managers and teachers.
- In Scandinavian countries such as Sweden, Norway and Finland, women's participation in public life is very high.
- A time use survey shows an average woman works a little over seven and a half hours a day and an average man six and a half, but men's work is more visible because it earns income.

Discrimination against women in India

- India is still a male-dominated, patriarchal society.
- Literacy among women is only 54 per cent compared with 76 per cent among men; girls perform well but drop out as parents prefer to spend on boys' education.
- Few women hold highly paid and valued jobs; an Indian woman works one hour more than a man daily, but much of her work is unpaid.
- The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 provides equal wages for equal work, yet women are paid less in almost all areas.
- Sex-selective abortion has reduced the child sex ratio to 919 girls per thousand boys (Census 2011), and below 850 or even 800 in some states.
- Harassment, exploitation and violence against women are common; urban areas are unsafe, and domestic violence occurs even within homes.

Women's political representation

- Feminists argue that unless women control power, their problems will not get attention, so more women must be elected.
- Women's share in the Lok Sabha touched 14.36 per cent for the first time in 2019; in state assemblies it is less than 5 per cent. India is among the bottom group of nations, behind several African and Latin American countries.

- Cabinets are largely all-male even when a woman is Chief Minister or Prime Minister.
- Panchayati Raj reserves one-third of seats in local bodies for women; there are more than 10 lakh elected women representatives in rural and urban local bodies.
- In 2023, the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam (Women's Reservation Act, 2023) was passed, providing 33 per cent reservation for women in the Lok Sabha, State Legislative Assemblies and the Delhi Assembly.
- Gender shows that disadvantaged groups benefit when a social division becomes a political issue.

Religion and politics

- Religious differences are often expressed in politics. Gandhiji said religion can never be separated from politics, meaning moral values of all religions should guide politics.
- Human rights groups ask the government to prevent communal riots and protect minorities; the women's movement wants family laws made more equitable.
- Such expressions are not wrong as long as every religion is treated equally. People can express their needs as members of religious communities, and the state may regulate religious practice to prevent discrimination.

Communalism

- The problem begins when religion is seen as the basis of the nation and is expressed in politics in exclusive, partisan terms: one religion presented as superior, demands formed in opposition to another group, and state power used for one group's domination. This is communal politics.
- Communal politics assumes religion is the principal basis of social community: followers of one religion form one community with the same interests, and followers of different religions cannot belong to one community. In its extreme form, it believes people of different religions cannot live as equal citizens in one nation.
- This belief is flawed: people of one religion have different interests, roles and identities, and many voices exist within every community.

Forms of communalism in politics

- Everyday beliefs: religious prejudices, stereotypes and belief in the superiority of one's religion.
- Quest for political dominance: majoritarian dominance for the majority community; a separate political unit for the minority community.
- Political mobilisation on religious lines using sacred symbols, religious leaders, emotional appeal and fear; special appeals to voters of one religion.
- Communal violence, riots and massacres, as at the time of Partition and after Independence.

Secular state

- The makers of the Constitution chose a secular state to meet the challenge of communalism.
- There is no official religion for the Indian state, unlike Buddhism in Sri Lanka, Islam in Pakistan or Christianity in England.
- The Constitution gives all individuals and communities freedom to profess, practise and propagate any religion, or not follow any.

- It prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion.
- It allows the state to intervene in religion to ensure equality within religious communities, for example by banning untouchability.
- Secularism is a foundation of India. A secular Constitution is necessary but not sufficient; communal prejudice must be countered in everyday life and religion-based mobilisation in politics.

Caste inequalities

- Caste division is special to India. The caste system is an extreme form of hereditary occupational division sanctioned by rituals: caste members practised similar occupations, married within the caste and did not eat with other castes.
- It was based on exclusion and untouchability of ‘outcaste’ groups. Reformers like Jotiba Phule, Gandhiji, B.R. Ambedkar and Periyar Ramaswami Naicker worked for a society free of caste inequality.
- Economic development, urbanisation, literacy, occupational mobility and the weakening of landlords have broken down old caste hierarchy; the Constitution prohibits caste-based discrimination.
- Yet caste persists: most people marry within caste, untouchability has not ended, groups denied education still lag behind, upper castes dominate the urban middle class, and caste remains linked to economic status.

Social and religious diversity in figures (Census 2011)

- Religion: Hindu 79.8%, Muslim 14.2%, Christian 2.3%, Sikh 1.7%, Buddhist 0.7%, Jain 0.4%, others 0.7%, not stated 0.2%.
- Proportions have not changed much since Independence; the Sachar Committee estimated that the Muslim share may rise only about 3 to 4 per cent in 50 years.
- Scheduled Castes (Dalits) are 16.6% and Scheduled Tribes (Adivasis) 8.6% of the population. The NSS 2004–05 estimated OBCs at around 41%. Together, SC, ST and OBC are about two-thirds of the population.
- Poverty data (NSSO 1999–2000) show STs and SCs with the highest share below the poverty line and upper castes heavily over-represented among the rich.

Caste in politics

- Parties choose candidates keeping in mind the caste composition of the electorate and include different castes in governments.
- Parties and candidates appeal to caste sentiment; some parties are seen as representing particular castes.
- Universal adult franchise and one-person-one-vote made leaders mobilise support and brought new consciousness among castes earlier treated as inferior.
- But elections are not only about caste: no constituency has a clear majority of one caste; no party wins all votes of a caste; many parties field candidates of the same caste; ruling parties and sitting MPs or MLAs often lose; and voters’ attachment to parties, economic interests, gender and assessment of government performance also matter.

Politics in caste

- Politics also influences caste: caste gets politicised.
- Each caste group tries to become bigger by incorporating neighbouring castes or sub-castes.

- Caste groups enter coalitions with other castes and communities, leading to dialogue and negotiation.
- New caste groups like ‘backward’ and ‘forward’ castes emerge in politics.
- Positive: it has given Dalits and OBCs better access to decision making and helped movements for dignity and access to land and opportunities.
- Negative: politics based only on caste can divert attention from poverty, development and corruption and may lead to tension, conflict and violence.

Forms of Communalism with Examples

A direct NCERT question.

Form	Example
Everyday beliefs	Religious prejudices, stereotypes, belief in one’s religion as superior
Quest for political dominance	Majoritarian dominance by the majority; demand for a separate unit by a minority
Political mobilisation on religious lines	Using sacred symbols, religious leaders and emotional appeals in elections
Communal violence	Riots and massacres at the time of Partition

Caste in Politics vs Politics in Caste

A favourite comparison.

Caste in politics	Politics in caste
Parties choose candidates by caste composition	Castes absorb sub-castes to become bigger
Appeals to caste sentiment in campaigns	Castes form coalitions and negotiate with others
Some parties seen as representing certain castes	New groups like backward and forward castes emerge
Adult franchise made leaders mobilise all castes	Disadvantaged castes gain access to decision making

NCERT Exercise Answers (Objective)

Answers to the NCERT objective questions.

- Gender divisions usually refer to unequal roles assigned by society to men and women.
- In India, seats are reserved for women in Panchayati Raj bodies (and, after the 2023 Act, will be in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies).
- Communal politics is based on beliefs A and C: one religion is superior, and followers of a religion form one community.
- The wrong statement about India’s Constitution: it gives official status to one religion.
- Social divisions based on caste are peculiar to India.
- Match: Feminist (1-B), Communalist (2-A), Castiest (3-D), Secularist (4-C), i.e. option (b).

Women in India: Areas of Disadvantage

Area	Fact from NCERT
Literacy	Women 54% vs men 76%
Education	Girls drop out as parents prefer spending on boys
Work and pay	Women work about one hour more daily; much unpaid; paid less despite Equal Remuneration Act, 1976
Child sex ratio	919 girls per 1,000 boys (Census 2011); below 850 or 800 in some states
Safety	Harassment, exploitation, domestic violence
Representation	14.36% women in Lok Sabha (2019); under 5% in assemblies; 33% reservation under the 2023 Act

Important Definitions and Terms

Term	Meaning
Sexual division of labour	System in which all work inside the home is done or organised by women
Feminist	A woman or man who believes in equal rights and opportunities for women and men
Patriarchy	A system that values men more and gives them power over women
Child sex ratio	Number of girl children per thousand boys
Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam	Women’s Reservation Act, 2023 giving 33% seats to women in Lok Sabha and assemblies
Family laws	Laws on marriage, divorce, adoption and inheritance
Communalism	Using religion in politics in exclusive and partisan terms, seeing religion as the basis of community
Secular state	A state with no official religion that treats all religions equally
Caste hierarchy	Ladder-like arrangement of castes from highest to lowest
Urbanisation	Shift of population from rural to urban areas
Occupational mobility	Shift from one occupation to another across generations
Vote bank	A caste or community a large part of which votes for one party

Short Answer Questions

Q1. Mention different aspects of life in which women are discriminated against in India.

Women have lower literacy (54% vs 76%), fewer women go for higher studies, few hold highly paid jobs, they are paid less for equal work, the child sex ratio is low due to sex-selective abortion, and they face harassment and domestic violence.

Q2. What is the status of women’s representation in India’s legislative bodies?

It has been very low: women formed 14.36% of the Lok Sabha for the first time in 2019 and under 5% in state assemblies. Local bodies have one-third reservation, and the Women’s Reservation Act, 2023 provides 33% reservation in the Lok Sabha and assemblies.

Q3. Mention any two constitutional provisions that make India a secular state.

India has no official religion, and the Constitution gives all individuals freedom to profess,

Q4. What is communalism?

Communalism is the use of religion in politics in exclusive and partisan terms, based on the belief that religion is the principal basis of social community and that followers of different religions have conflicting interests.

Q5. State how caste inequalities still continue in India.

Most people marry within their caste, untouchability has not ended completely, groups once denied education still lag behind, upper castes are over-represented in the urban middle class and among the rich, and SCs and STs are over-represented among the poor.

Q6. State two reasons why caste alone cannot determine election results in India.

No constituency has a clear majority of a single caste, so candidates must win support of many castes. Also, no party gets all the votes of a caste, and ruling parties and sitting MPs often lose elections.

Q7. What is a feminist movement?

Radical women's movements that aim at equality between men and women not only in political and legal status, education and careers, but also in personal and family life.

Q8. What is meant by sexual division of labour?

It is a system in which all work inside the home, such as cooking, cleaning and caring for children, is done or organised by women, while men do work outside the home.

Long Answer Questions

Q1. State different forms of communal politics with one example each.

Everyday beliefs: religious prejudices and stereotypes, such as believing one's own religion is superior.

Quest for political dominance: majoritarian dominance by the majority community, or a demand for a separate political unit by a minority.

Political mobilisation on religious lines: using sacred symbols, religious leaders and emotional appeals to unite voters of one religion.

Communal violence: riots and massacres, such as those at the time of Partition.

Each of these undermines equal citizenship and the idea of India.

Q2. Explain how caste and politics influence each other.

Caste in politics: parties choose candidates and ministers by caste composition and appeal to caste sentiment.

Universal adult franchise forced leaders to mobilise all castes and gave new consciousness to lower castes.

Politics in caste: castes absorb sub-castes, form coalitions and create new groups like backward and forward castes.

Positive: disadvantaged Dalits and OBCs gained access to decision making and raised demands for dignity and resources.

Caste is not the only factor in elections; party loyalty, economic interests and government performance also matter.

Q3. Why is gender division considered a positive example of social division expressed in politics?

Women’s agitations raised the gender issue in politics and won voting rights and better political and legal status.

Political mobilisation improved women’s education and career opportunities; women now work in many professions.

Raising women’s issues led to one-third reservation in local bodies, with more than 10 lakh elected women representatives.

The Women’s Reservation Act, 2023 provides 33% reservation in the Lok Sabha and assemblies.

This shows disadvantaged groups benefit when their unequal treatment becomes a political issue.

MCQs with Answers

1. When we speak of gender divisions, we usually refer to(a) Biological difference 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 womenAnswer: (b) Unequal roles assigned by society to men and women

2. Before 2023, seats in India were reserved for women in(a) Lok Sabha (b) State legislative assemblies (c) Cabinets (d) Panchayati Raj bodiesAnswer: (d) Panchayati Raj bodies

3. Which statement about India’s Constitution is wrong?(a) It prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion (b) It gives official status to one religion (c) It gives freedom to profess any religion (d) It ensures equality within religious communitiesAnswer: (b) It gives official status to one religion

4. Social divisions based on _____ are peculiar to India.(a) Gender (b) Religion (c) Caste (d) LanguageAnswer: (c) Caste

5. A person who believes in equal rights and opportunities for women and men is a(a) Communalist (b) Feminist (c) Secularist (d) CastiestAnswer: (b) Feminist

6. The literacy rate among women in India, as per NCERT, is(a) 44 per cent (b) 54 per cent (c) 64 per cent (d) 76 per centAnswer: (b) 54 per cent

7. The child sex ratio in India as per Census 2011 is(a) 850 (b) 900 (c) 919 (d) 940Answer: (c) 919

8. The Women’s Reservation Act was passed in(a) 1976 (b) 1992 (c) 2019 (d) 2023Answer: (d) 2023

9. The Equal Remuneration Act was passed in(a) 1950 (b) 1976 (c) 1992 (d) 2005Answer: (b) 1976

10. In 2011, Scheduled Castes formed what share of India’s population?(a) 8.6 per cent (b)

Quick Revision Points

- Gender division is based on social expectations, not biology.
- Sexual division of labour makes women's work invisible.
- Feminists seek equality in public and personal life; Scandinavian countries lead.
- Women: literacy 54% vs 76%; child sex ratio 919; Equal Remuneration Act 1976.
- Lok Sabha women 14.36% (2019); assemblies under 5%.
- Local bodies: one-third seats for women; over 10 lakh women representatives.
- Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam 2023: 33% in Lok Sabha, assemblies, Delhi Assembly.
- Communalism: religion as principal basis of community; forms: beliefs, dominance, mobilisation, violence.
- Secular state: no official religion, freedom of religion, no discrimination, state can intervene for equality.
- Caste: hereditary occupational division sanctioned by rituals; reformers Phule, Gandhi, Ambedkar, Periyar.
- Census 2011: Hindu 79.8%, Muslim 14.2%; SC 16.6%, ST 8.6%; OBC ~41% (NSS 2004–05).
- Caste in politics vs politics in caste; caste alone does not decide elections.

Chapter Summary

Social differences of gender, religion and caste can become divisions in politics. Gender division, based on social roles rather than biology, keeps women disadvantaged in literacy, pay, safety and representation, but political mobilisation has brought gains such as one-third reservation in local bodies and the Women's Reservation Act, 2023.

Religion may legitimately inform politics if all religions are treated equally, but communalism, which treats religion as the basis of the nation and seeks domination, threatens the very idea of India; hence India chose a secular state. Caste inequalities have declined but persist. Caste influences politics and politics reshapes caste, giving disadvantaged groups a voice but also risking division and diversion from issues like poverty and development.

Exam Tips and PYQ Pattern

- Update your answers with the Women's Reservation Act, 2023; many older notes miss it.
- The NCERT exercise questions (forms of communalism, secular provisions, caste inequality) are asked directly.
- Learn figures: 54% vs 76% literacy, 919 sex ratio, 14.36% Lok Sabha, 16.6% SC, 8.6% ST.
- Case-based questions often use the time use survey, sex ratio map or caste-poverty table.
- For caste questions, discuss both positive and negative effects.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is communalism?

Using religion in politics in an exclusive and partisan way, treating religion as the main basis of community.

No official religion, freedom to follow any religion, prohibition of religious discrimination, and state power to ensure equality within religions.

What is the Women’s Reservation Act, 2023?

The Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, providing 33% reservation for women in the Lok Sabha, State Assemblies and the Delhi Assembly.

Is this chapter in the 2026-27 syllabus?

Yes. It is Chapter 3 of Democratic Politics II for 2026-27.

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Conclusion

Gender, Religion and Caste shows how social differences can be expressed in politics in healthy or harmful ways. Revise the women’s disadvantage table, forms of communalism, secular provisions and the caste-politics comparison to answer every question confidently.

More Notes: Class 10 Political Science Chapter 2: Federalism notes | Class 10 Political Science Chapter 4: Political Parties notes | Class 10 Political Science Chapter 2: Federalism notes | Class 10 Political Science Chapter 4: Political Parties notes | All Class 10 Social Science notes

Author Bio: Written and reviewed by the Nextoper Editorial Team, a group of CBSE social science educators who build chapter notes directly from the NCERT textbook and past board paper patterns.

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