CLASS 10 · DEMOCRATIC POLITICS · CHAPTER 3

Gender, Religion and Caste

Every section of the chapter in one sentence, with the key terms highlighted. To test yourself, cover the highlighted words with a strip of paper and say them aloud. The figures, cartoons, graphs and tables are taken from the chapter PDF.

One-liners 3 divisions table Memory tricks Flashcards Quiz Revision plan

One line per section

0 Overview

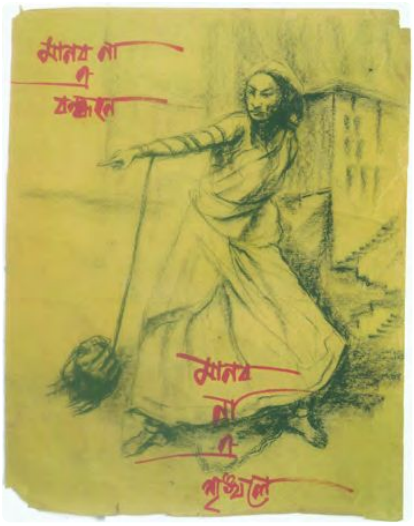
Social diversity does not threaten democracy; this chapter looks at three social differences that can become **social divisions and inequalities**, based on **gender, religion and caste**, and asks whether their expression in politics is **healthy or otherwise**.

1 Gender and politics

Gender division is a **hierarchical social division** seen everywhere but rarely recognised in politics; it is thought natural and unchangeable, yet it is **not based on biology** but on **social expectations and stereotypes**.

1.1 Public/private division

The **sexual division of labour** makes women do (or organise) **all work inside the home** while men work outside; men take up such work only **when it is paid** (most tailors and hotel cooks are men), and women's paid and domestic work is **not valued or recognised**, so their role in **public life, especially politics, is minimal**.



A poster from Bengal affirming women's strength (© Zuban)

1.2 Political expression of gender division

Women organised and agitated for **voting rights**, better **political and legal status**, education and careers; radical **feminist movements** sought equality in **personal and family life** too; this mobilisation improved women's role in public life, and in **Scandinavian countries (Sweden, Norway, Finland)** women's participation in public life is very high.



"Perceptions of ideal woman" poster (© Zuban)

1.3 Women's disadvantage in India

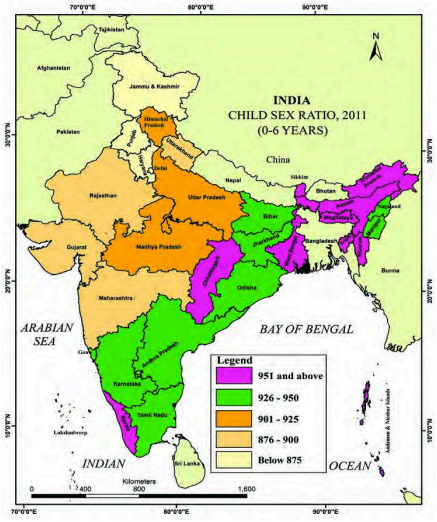
India is still a **male-dominated, patriarchal society**: female literacy is **54% vs 76%** for men, a woman works **about one hour more a day** (7½ h vs 6½ h) mostly **unpaid**, women are paid less despite the **Equal Remuneration Act, 1976**, **sex-selective abortion** pushed the **child sex ratio down to 919** (below 850 or even 800 in some States), and women face **harassment, exploitation and domestic violence**.

Daily time use (hours: minutes)

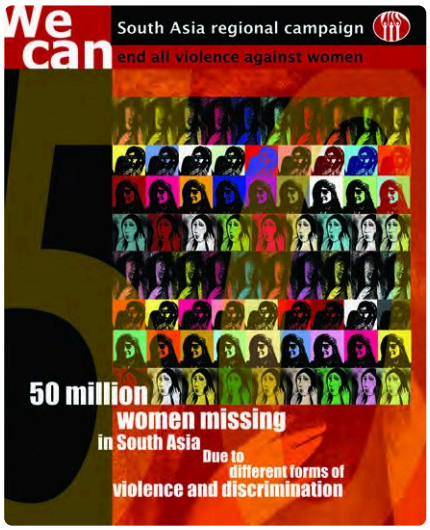
Activities	Men	Women
Income generating work	6:00	2:40
Household and related work	0:30	5:00
Talking, Gossip	1:25	1:20
No work/ Leisure	3:40	3:50
Sleep, self-care, reading etc.	12:25	11:10

Source: Government of India, *Time Use Survey*, 1998-99.

Daily time use (hours:minutes), Time Use Survey 1998-99



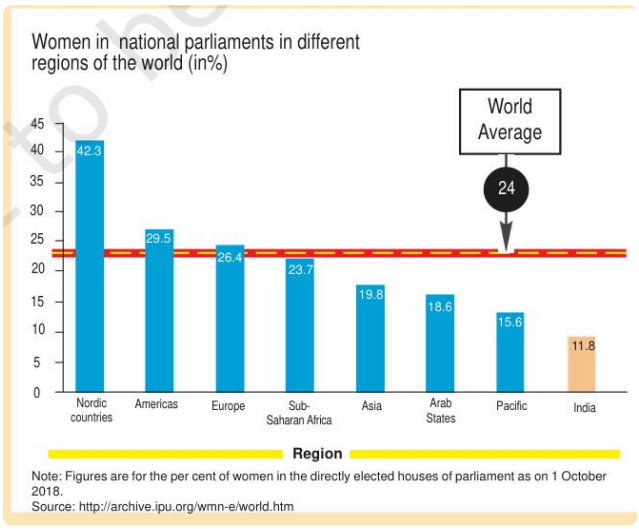
India: child sex ratio, 2011 (0-6 years), Census 2011



"50 million women missing in South Asia" poster (© Oxfam GB)

1.4 Women's political representation

Unless **women control power** their problems get little attention, yet women were only **14.36% of Lok Sabha (2019)** and **under 5% of state assemblies**, putting India in the **bottom group of nations**; **Panchayati Raj** reserves **one-third of seats** in panchayats and municipalities (**over 10 lakh** elected women), and the **Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023** gives **33% reservation** in Lok Sabha, State Assemblies and the Delhi Assembly.



Women in national parliaments by region (%), as on 1 Oct 2018 (IPU)

2 Religion, communalism and politics

Religious division is **not as universal as gender** but is **often expressed in politics**; **Gandhiji** said religion (meaning **moral values**) can never be separated from politics, **human rights groups** want protection of minorities, and the **women's movement** wants fairer **family laws**; such acts are fine **as long as they treat every religion equally**.

2.1 Communalism

The problem begins when **religion is seen as the basis of the nation** and used in **exclusive and partisan** terms; **communal politics** holds that followers of one religion form **one community with the same interests**, that different religions **cannot be equal citizens** in one nation, a belief that is **fundamentally flawed** because everyone has **many identities and voices**.

2.2 Forms of communalism in politics

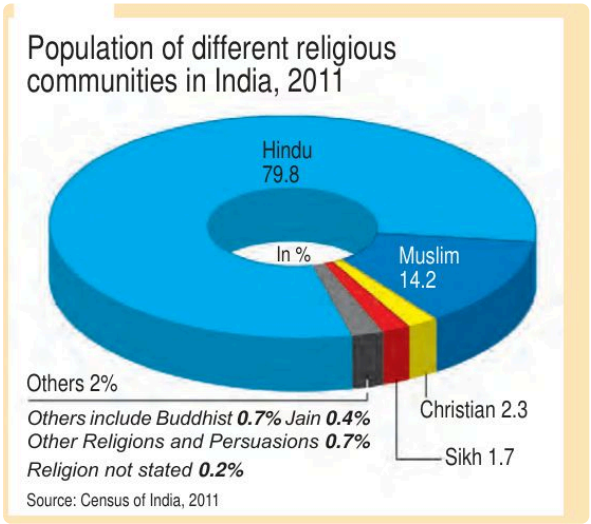
Communalism shows up as **everyday beliefs** (prejudices, stereotypes, superiority), a quest for **political dominance** (**majoritarian dominance** or a **separate political unit**), **political mobilisation on religious lines** (sacred symbols, religious leaders, emotional appeal, fear), and its ugliest form, **communal violence, riots and massacre**, as at **Partition**.

2.3 Secular state

To meet the challenge of communalism the Constitution chose a **secular state**: **no official religion** (unlike Buddhism in Sri Lanka, Islam in Pakistan, Christianity in England), **freedom to profess, practice and propagate** any religion or none, **no discrimination on grounds of religion**, and the state may **intervene to ensure equality** within religions (e.g. **banning untouchability**); a secular Constitution is **necessary but not sufficient**.

2.4 Social and religious diversity of India (Census)

The **Census** records religion every ten years: in 2011 **Hindus 79.8%**, **Muslims 14.2%**, **Christians 2.3%**, **Sikhs 1.7%**; proportions have changed little, and the **Sachar Committee** estimates show Muslims rising only **3–4% in 50 years**; **SC 16.6%** (Dalits), **ST 8.6%** (Adivasis) and **OBC about 41%** (NSS 2004–05) make about **two-thirds** of the population.



Population of religious communities in India, 2011 (%), Census of India

3 Caste and politics

Gender expression in politics was **largely positive**, religion **largely negative**, and caste has **both positive and negative** aspects.

3.1 Caste inequalities

Caste division is **special to India**: **hereditary occupational division sanctioned by rituals**, marrying and eating within the group, and **untouchability** for 'outcaste' groups; reformers **Jotiba Phule, Gandhiji, B.R. Ambedkar, Periyar Ramaswami Naicker** fought it, and **economic development, urbanisation, literacy, occupational mobility** and **weaker landlords** are breaking the old **caste hierarchy**, but people still **marry within caste** and caste is still **linked to economic status**.

3.2 Caste inequality today

Caste **regulates access to resources**; there are now rich and poor in every caste, but the NSS shows **'upper' castes best off**, **Dalits and Adivasis worst off**, backward classes in between, with far more of the lowest castes **below the poverty line** (e.g. **ST 45.8%** rural vs **Hindu upper castes 11.7%**).

Percentage of population living below the poverty line, 1999–2000

Caste and Community groups	Rural	Urban
Scheduled Tribes	45.8	35.6
Scheduled Castes	35.9	38.3
Other Backward Classes	27.0	29.5
Muslim Upper Castes	26.8	34.2
Hindu Upper Castes	11.7	9.9
Christian Upper Castes	9.6	5.4
Sikh Upper Castes	0.0	4.9
Other Upper Castes	16.0	2.7
All Groups	27.0	23.4

Note: 'Upper Caste' here means those who are not from SC, ST, or OBC. Below the poverty line means those who spent ₹327 or less per person per month in rural and ₹454 or less per person per month in urban areas.
Source: *National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO), Government of India*, 55th *Round*, 1999–2000

Percentage of population below the poverty line, 1999-2000 (NSSO 55th Round)

3.3 Caste in politics

Casteism holds caste is the **sole basis of social community**; parties pick candidates by the **caste composition of the electorate**, make **appeals to caste sentiment**, and **universal adult franchise** (one-person-one-vote) brought **new consciousness** to lower castes; yet elections are not only about caste, since **no constituency has a single-caste majority**, **no party gets all votes of a caste** ('**vote bank**'), and **ruling parties and sitting MPs/MLAs often lose**.



"The Vote Bank of India" cartoon (© Ajith Ninan, India Today Book of Cartoons)

3.4 Politics in caste

It is not politics that gets caste-ridden but **caste that gets politicised**: castes become **bigger by including sub-castes**, form **coalitions** through dialogue and negotiation, and **new groups ('backward', 'forward')** appear; this helped **Dalits and OBCs gain access to decision making**, but caste-only politics can **divert attention from poverty, development and corruption** and cause **tension and violence**.

Three divisions in one table

DIVISION	HOW WIDESPREAD	FORMS OF THE ISSUE	LAWS / CONSTITUTION	IN POLITICS
Gender	Everywhere (hierarchical), rarely seen as political	Sexual division of labour; literacy 54% vs 76%; unequal pay; child sex ratio 919; violence	Equal Remuneration Act 1976; ⅓ seats in panchayats & municipalities; Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam 2023 (33%)	Largely **positive**: feminist movements won rights
Religion	Not universal but widespread	Communalism: everyday beliefs, dominance, mobilisation, violence	Secular state: no official religion, freedom of religion, no discrimination, state may intervene (bans untouchability)	Largely **negative** when communal
Caste	Special to India	Hereditary occupations, untouchability, marrying within caste, poverty gap	Constitution prohibits caste discrimination; untouchability banned	**Both**: voice for Dalits & OBCs, but diverts from poverty, development, corruption

Memory tricks

THE THREE DIVISIONS

G-R-C = + − ±

Gender largely positive, **R**eligion largely negative, **C**aste both. "Good, Rough, Complicated".

GENDER = SOCIAL, NOT BIOLOGY

S & S

Gender division rests on **S**ocial expectations and **S**tereotypes, not biology. That is the answer to textbook Q7.

WOMEN'S DISADVANTAGES

L-W-P-S-V

"Ladies Work, Paid Smaller, Victimised": Literacy 54 vs 76, Work 1 hour more unpaid, Pay unequal, Sex ratio 919, Violence.

WOMEN'S SEATS

⅓ · 14.36 · <5 · 33

One-third in local bodies (10 lakh+ women), 14.36% Lok Sabha 2019, under 5% in state assemblies, 33% promised by the 2023 Act.

4 FORMS OF COMMUNALISM

B-D-M-V

"Bad Dreams Make Violence": everyday Beliefs, Dominance (majoritarian / separate unit), Mobilisation on religious lines, Violence (riots, massacre).

SECULAR STATE PROVISIONS

N-F-P-I

"No Free Pizza Inside": No official religion, Freedom to profess/practise/propagate, Prohibits discrimination, state may Intervene for equality.

OFFICIAL RELIGIONS ABROAD

SL-B · P-I · E-C

Sri **L**anka Buddhism, **P**akistan Islam, **E**ngland Christianity. India: none.

ANTI-CASTE REFORMERS

P-G-A-P

"Please Give Ambedkar Praise": Phule (Jotiba), Gandhiji, Ambedkar (B.R.), Periyar (Ramaswami Naicker).

WHY CASTE HIERARCHY IS BREAKING

E-U-L-O-W

"Every Urban Learner Opens Windows": Economic development, Urbanisation, Literacy & education, Occupational mobility, Weaker landlords.

CASTE IN POLITICS

C-A-F

Candidates by caste composition, Appeals to caste sentiment, Franchise (one-person-one-vote) brought new consciousness.

ELECTIONS ≠ ONLY CASTE

4 "No"s

No single-caste majority seat; No party gets a whole caste's votes; No guarantee (many same-caste candidates, many voters with none); No safe seat (ruling party and sitting MP/MLA often lose).

POLITICS IN CASTE

B-C-N

Castes grow **B**igger, form **C**oalitions, **N**ew groups appear ('backward', 'forward'). "Big Coalitions are New".

Key numbers: say them in pairs

Literacy	Women 54% vs men 76%
Work per day	Woman a little over 7½ h vs man 6½ h (Time Use Survey, six states, 1998–99)
Child sex ratio	919 girls per 1000 boys (Census 2011); below 850 or even 800 in some States
Women in parliaments	Nordic 42.3% · world average 24% · India 11.8% (2018); Lok Sabha 14.36% (2019)
Religions, 2011	Hindu 79.8 · Muslim 14.2 · Christian 2.3 · Sikh 1.7 · Others 2 (Buddhist 0.7, Jain 0.4)
Caste groups	SC 16.6% · ST 8.6% (2011) · OBC ~41% (NSS 2004–05) → SC+ST+OBC ≈ two-thirds of India, three-fourths of Hindus
Below poverty line (rural)	ST 45.8 · SC 35.9 · OBC 27.0 · Hindu upper castes 11.7 · all groups 27.0 (1999–2000)

Trick: literacy gap 76 − 54 = 22 points. 919 reads the same forwards and backwards. Nordic 42.3 is "almost half"; India 11.8 is "about one in nine".

Timeline: read it as a story

- **1976** Equal Remuneration Act: equal wages for equal work.
- **1998–99** Time Use Survey in six states: women work more, mostly unpaid.
- **1999–2000** NSSO 55th Round: poverty still follows the caste ladder.
- **2004–05** National Sample Survey: OBCs about 41% of the population.
- **2011** Census: child sex ratio 919; SC 16.6%, ST 8.6%; Hindu 79.8%, Muslim 14.2%.
- **2018** IPU data: world average of women in parliaments 24%, India 11.8%.
- **2019** Women reach 14.36% of Lok Sabha for the first time.
- **2023** Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam: 33% seats for women in Lok Sabha, State Assemblies, Delhi Assembly.

Trick: the story moves from *pay* (1976) → *work* (1999) → *poverty* (2000) → *counting* (2005, 2011) → *seats* (2018, 2019, 2023).

Flashcards

Cover the answer (→) with your hand, say it out loud, then check.

Is gender division based on biology?

→ No. It is based on social expectations and stereotypes

What is the sexual division of labour?

→ All work inside the home is done by the women of the family, or organised by them through domestic helpers

Who is a feminist?

→ A woman or a man who believes in equal rights and opportunities for women and men

What is patriarchy?

→ Literally 'rule by father': a system that values men more and gives them power over women

Countries where women's participation in public life is very high?

→ Scandinavian countries: Sweden, Norway, Finland

Literacy rate of women vs men?

→ Women 54%, men 76%

Which Act says equal wages for equal work?

→ Equal Remuneration Act, 1976

Child sex ratio in India and its cause?

→ 919 girls per 1000 boys; sex-selective abortion

Women in Lok Sabha in 2019?

→ 14.36% of its total strength (first time); under 5% in state assemblies

Seats reserved for women in local bodies?

→ One-third in panchayats and municipalities; over 10 lakh elected women

What does Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023 do?

→ Gives 33% reservation for women in Lok Sabha, State Assemblies and Delhi Assembly

What did Gandhiji mean by religion in politics?

→ Moral values that inform all religions, not any one religion

What are family laws?

→ Laws on family matters like marriage, divorce, adoption, inheritance; different for followers of different religions

Communal politics is based on which idea?

→ Religion is the principal basis of social community

Four forms of communalism?

→ Everyday beliefs, political dominance, mobilisation on religious lines, communal violence

Official religions of Sri Lanka, Pakistan, England?

→ Buddhism, Islam, Christianity (India has none)

Four leaders who fought caste inequality?

→ Jotiba Phule, Gandhiji, B.R. Ambedkar, Periyar Ramaswami Naicker

What is occupational mobility?

→ Shift from one occupation to another, usually when a new generation takes up new occupations

SC and ST share of population in 2011?

→ SC 16.6%, ST 8.6%

What is a 'vote bank'?

→ A caste whose large proportion of voters vote for one party

Quick quiz

First six are the textbook exercise questions (Q7–Q12). Correct answers are outlined in green.

1. When we speak of gender divisions, we usually refer to...

- Biological difference between men and women
- **Unequal roles assigned by the society to men and women**
- Unequal child sex ratio
- Absence of voting rights for women in democracies

2. In India seats are reserved for women in...

- Lok Sabha
- State legislative assemblies
- Cabinets
- **Panchayati Raj bodies**

3. Communal politics is based on the belief that: A. One religion is superior; B. Different religions can live together as equal citizens; C. Followers of a religion constitute one community; D. State power cannot be used for domination of one religious group. Which are correct?

- A, B, C and D
- A, B and D
- **A and C**
- B and D

4. Which statement about India's Constitution is wrong? It...

prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion | **gives official status to one religion**

provides to all individuals freedom to profess any religion

ensures equality of citizens within religious communities

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

Gender | Religion | **Caste** | Language

6. Match: 1 equal rights for women and men, 2 religion is the principal basis of community, 3 caste is the principal basis of community, 4 does not discriminate on religious beliefs → A Communalist, B Feminist, C Secularist, D Castiest

B C A D | **B A D C** | D C A B | C A B D

7. The child sex ratio in India has fallen to...

800 | 850 | **919** | 943

8. Which law provides equal wages for equal work?

Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023 | **Equal Remuneration Act, 1976**

Panchayati Raj Act | Sachar Committee Report

9. Which region has the highest share of women in parliament (2018)?

Americas | Europe | **Nordic countries** | Asia

10. Caste groups enlarging by including sub-castes is an example of...

Caste in politics | **Politics in caste (caste gets politicised)** | Communalism | Secularism

Revision plan

Day 1
Read the one-liners aloud twice. Then cover the highlighted words and say them.

Day 2
Write the three-divisions table from memory on blank paper. Check and fix in red.

Day 4
Flashcards + quiz. Re-read only the sections you missed.

Day 7
Explain the chapter to someone in 5 minutes without looking.

Day 14
Answer the textbook questions 1–6 (women's disadvantages, forms of communalism, secular provisions, caste and elections) using the key terms.

MAP METHOD

On a blank India outline map, shade the States with child sex ratio below 900 (copy from the Census 2011 map). Next to it, draw the religion pie and the women-in-parliament bars by hand. Pictures stick better than lists.

MEMORY PALACE

Walk through your home: the **kitchen** is the sexual division of labour, the **study table** holds 54 vs 76 literacy, the **living room TV** shows Lok Sabha 14.36% and the 2023 Act, the **prayer corner** holds the four forms of communalism and N-F-P-I, the **dining table** is caste (who eats and marries with whom), and the **front door** is the polling booth with the four "No"s.

BLURTING

Close the book, set a 5-minute timer and write every key term you remember. The gaps show you what to revise.