

GENDER, RELIGION AND CASTE

SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS [3 MARKS]

1. **What is casteism ? How is casteism in India different as compared to other societies ?**
OR

Describe any five features of the caste system prevailing in India.

Ans. (i) Organisation of people into social groups for the purpose of marriage, work and diet is known as the caste system.

(ii) The social structure of India is based upon the caste system. All societies have some kind of social inequality and some form of division of labour, but the Indian caste system is an extreme form of division of labour based on birth.

(iii) Although in most societies, occupations are passed on from one generation to another, but in India, it is different from other societies as in this system hereditary occupational division was sanctioned by rituals.

(iv) The Indian caste system was very rigid. Members of the same caste group were supposed to form a social community that practiced the same or similar occupation, married within the caste group, and did not eat with members from other caste groups.

(v) Indian caste system continues to be closely linked to economic status.

2. **Mention any positive role of caste in politics.**

OR

Describe the positive and negative aspects of relationship between caste and politics

Ans. (i) In some situations, expression of caste differences in politics gives many disadvantaged communities the space to demand their share of power.

(ii) In this sense, caste politics has helped people from the Dalits and the OBC castes to gain better access to decision making.

(iii) Several political and non-political organisations have been demanding and agitating for the end of discrimination against particular castes, for more dignity and more access to land, resources and opportunities.

Negative :

(i) It disrupts social harmony.

(ii) It can divert attention from other pressing issues like poverty, corruption, etc.

3. **Why is the idea of communal politics fundamentally flawed ?**

Ans. Most of these beliefs are fundamentally not true. People of one religion do not have the same interests and aspirations in most of the contexts. Every individual has his/her own choices, roles, positions and identities. There are many voices inside every community. All these voices have a right to be heard. Therefore, any attempt to bring all followers of one religion together in contexts other than religion is bound to suppress many voices within that community.

4. **What are Feminist Movements? What were their major demands ?**

OR

What was the Feminist Movement? Explain the political demands of the Feminist Movement in India.

Ans. These are the movements which are organised by various women organisations to create equality for women in personal and family life.

(i) These feminist movements demand equal rights for women in all spheres of life.

(ii) There were agitations in different countries for the extension of voting rights to women.

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

(iv) The movements also demanded in improving the educational and career opportunities for the women.

5. **Explain the relationship between religion and politics.**

OR

How are religious differences expressed in politics ?

Ans. (i) Views of Gandhiji : Gandhiji used to say that religion can never be separated from politics. What he meant by religion was not any particular religion like Hinduism or Islam, but the moral values that are there in all religions. According to him, politics must be guided by ethics drawn from all religions.

(ii) **Views of Human rights groups :** Human rights groups in our country have argued that most of the victims of communal riots in our country are people from religious minorities. They have demanded that the government should take special steps to protect religious minorities.

(iii) **Women's Movements :** Women's movements have argued that family laws of all religions discriminate against women. So they have demanded that the government should change these laws to make them more equitable.

6. **Name the movements which agitate for women's rights. How have these movements helped in improving women's conditions ?**

Ans. Feminist Movements.

(i) Political expression of gender division and political mobilisation on this question helped to improve the women's role in public life.

(ii) Now, women are working in occupations such as scientists, doctors, engineers, lawyers, managers, and college and university teachers which were earlier not considered suitable for women.

(iii) In some parts of the world, for example, (») By reserving some seats in the Lok Sabha in the Scandinavian countries such as Sweden, Norway and Finland, the participation of women in public life is very high.

7. **Mention any four steps which can be undertaken to improve the women's representation in politics.**

OR

Suggest any three steps to improve the women's participation in politics.

Ans. (i) To make it legally binding to have a fair proportion of women in the elected bodies

(ii) By reserving some seats in the Lok Sabha and the State Assemblies for women.

(iii) Political parties should also give due representation to women members.

(iv) By raising the literacy rate.

8. **Explain three features of the model of a secular state of India.**

Answer:

The concept of a secular state in India purports equal treatment all religions and to be officially neutral in the matters of religion.

The following are the features which make India a secular state.

- Unlike Christianity in America or Buddhism in Sri Lanka, India does not purport to or give special recognition to any religion. The Constitution of India has nowhere prescribed a particular religion.
- All Citizens of India and all communities and sects in India have been given freedom to practice, profess and propagate any religion under the Fundamental rights of the Constitution.
- The Constitution of India has clearly put a ban on any discrimination on the ground of religion. It provides for equal opportunity for all individuals irrespective of their religion.

9. **Explain how the proper representation of women in legislature can solve the problem of gender-based discrimination in India.**

Answer:

The proper representation of women in legislature can solve the problem of gender-based discrimination in the following ways.

- Proper representation of women in legislature will result in more women- friendly laws.
- Better policing will help in greater security for women and better law enforcement.
- Seeing women in positions of decision-making is reassuring women empowerment, which helps to improve their image.

10. Mention any three constitutional provisions that make India a secular state.

Answer:

The constitutional provisions which make India a 'secular state' are as follows.

- The Constitution of India does not give special recognition to any religion and there is no state religion in India, unlike, Christianity in America, and Buddhism in Sri Lanka.
- All individuals and communities have been given freedom to practice, profess and propagate any religion.
- The Constitution of India has put a ban on any discrimination on the grounds of religion.
- According to the constitution, the state cannot intervene in the matters of religion to promote religious equality.

11. Is the caste system coming to an end in India? Give arguments in support of your answer.

Answer:

No, I do not think that the caste system is coming to an end in India. From time immemorial, the caste system has been an inseparable part of Indian society and has been deeply rooted in our culture. It is entrenched in the society and brings about discrimination. Even though a number of government policies have been implemented, the caste system has not been completely eradicated.

The following are the instances to support this argument.

- Even though the constitution provides for various provisions for marrying outside the caste, most people in India still marry in their caste.
- Citizens of the country, while casting their votes, usually vote for a candidate of their own caste, rather than any other caste irrespective of the credibility of the candidate.
- Political parties keep in mind the caste composition of the electorate before choosing a candidate to represent their party so as to get necessary support for benefiting their election spree.
- Untouchability still has not completely eradicated from the Indian society even though the constitution prohibits any kind of untouchability.

12. Suggest any two measures to check casteism in India.

Answer:

The following are the two measures to check casteism in India.

- **Spread of education:** Education upgrades one's level of thinking and helps in eradicating the misconceptions of one's mind. All possible steps should be taken to educate the masses.
- **Economic equality:** Inequality in the economic life creates the feeling of superiority and inferiority among the members of different caste groups. Steps need to be taken to maintain economic equality of all castes.
- **Abolition of Reservation Policy:** Reservation in government job, education and other sectors creates conflicting attitude among the members of two different castes. When the people of higher castes having adequate educational qualification are deprived of all facilities, they revolt against the lower caste people.
- **Political reforms:** Political leaders and parties based on caste should be banned from the political horizon.
- The name and aim of educational institutions referring to castes need to be given up.

13. **How can religion be used in politics in a positive manner? Express your view point.**

Answer:

Politics and religion can be a deadly combination if not used wisely. It should be for the good of the people rather than used as a weapon to settle scores. **Religion can be used in politics in a positive manner in the following ways.**

- Politics should be guided by the ethics and values of religion.
- We should raise our demands as a religious community but not at the cost of other religions.
- Political leaders should also ensure that religion is not used as a medium of oppression and discrimination. They should have equal response to different religious conflicts or demands.

LONG ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS [5 MARKS]

14. **Why are caste barriers breaking down in India? Explain any five reasons.**

Answer:

In the recent decades, caste barriers have been breaking down in India because of the following reasons.

- It has been the efforts of social reformers that people have realised the caste based differences had no logic.
- The economic development, large scale urbanisation and occupational mobility has further erased the caste barriers.
- Spread of literacy and education has also played a great role in upgrading the beliefs and ideologies of the people.
- Complete eradication of landlordism has resulted in the decline of caste system.
- The constitutional provision of prohibiting caste based discriminations in every form and providing equal opportunities to all has reversed the caste injustices.

15. **Describe three advantages and two disadvantages of the political expression of caste differences.**

Answer:

The following are the advantages of the political expression of caste differences.

- In the present times, several political and non-political organisations have fought discrimination against particular castes, for more dignity and more access to land, resources and opportunities for the people from lower caste, who were not given equal status and opportunity like the upper caste people.
- In some situations, expression of caste differences in politics gives many disadvantaged communities the space to demand their share of power. Usually it is seen that the disadvantaged communities are not able to exercise their rights but because of political representation of such caste differences, the oppressed people get to put forward their rights to get what they deserve.
- **The following are the disadvantages of the political expression of caste differences.**
- In case of religion, politics based on caste identity alone is not very healthy in democracy. It can divert attention from other pressing issues such as poverty, development and corruption. Because caste is not the only issue that is causing a hindrance in the society there are various issues that need to be given equal importance.
- In some cases, caste differences lead to caste division, which further leads to violence and tension among the people of different caste and that might lead to outburst of riots in the society.

16. **“Women in the Indian society still suffer from discrimination and oppression.” Support the statement with suitable examples.**

OR

Describe any five ways in which women in India are still discriminated against and oppressed.

OR

What are the problems faced by Indian women which affect their social status? Explain any five.

OR

Describe any four aspects of life in which women are discriminated against in Indian society.

OR

Explain any five aspects of our day-to-day life in which women are discriminated against in India.

Answer:

The following points sum up how women are still discriminated against and oppressed in India.

- **Literacy rate:** The first and foremost discrimination is in the field of education where the literacy rate among women is only 66 per cent when compared to a high 82 per cent in males. Even otherwise, parents prefer educating spending their resources of education of a male child rather than a female child.
- **Sex ratio:** The sex ratio in India is as low as 940 females per 1000 males. The proportion of women as compared to men is very low. A major reason behind this is that parents prefer having a male child over a female child keeping in view the future perspective.
- **Unpaid work:** The proportion of highly-paid women is very less when compared to highly-paid men. Though on an average, Indian women work one hour more than men every day but they are not equally paid and thus their work is also not often valued as much as that of men.
- **Domestic violence:** Women every day in Indian society are harassed, exploited, and subjected to all sorts of violence behind the closed doors. Both in urban and rural areas, domestic violence is one of the most prominent form of discrimination faced by women. Many cases of domestic violence and dowry deaths are reported in the media every day.
- **Female foeticide:** In India, a male child is considered a blessing and a female child is considered a bane. This has come to an extent where the female child is killed in the womb of the mother. This killing of foetus is known as foeticide. Female foeticide is prevalent in both urban and rural areas.

17. Explain any five reasons for the declining caste system in India.

Answer:

The following are the five reasons for the declining caste system in India.

- **Growth of literacy and education:** After industrialisation the literacy rate has increased.
- **Occupational mobility:** Due to occupational mobility, the new generation takes up occupations other than those practised by their ancestors.
- **Large-scale urbanisation:** Shift of people from rural areas to urban areas in search of jobs and better living conditions.
- **Efforts made by leaders and reformers:** The political leaders and social reformers worked to establish a society in which caste inequalities are absent.
- **Economic development:** Adoption of newer technologies from agriculture-based to industry-based economy and general improvement in living standards.

18. What is communalism ? What are the major beliefs of communal people ?

Ans. Communalism is a situation when a particular community tries to promote its own interest at the cost of other communities.

Communal politics is based on the idea that religion is the principal basis of social community.

Communalism involves thinking along the following lines:

- The followers of a particular religion must belong to one community.
- Their fundamental interests should be the same. Any difference that they may have is irrelevant or trivial for community life.
- Communalism also follows that people who follow different religions cannot belong to the same

social community. If the followers of different religions have some commonalities, these are superficial and immaterial. Their interests are bound to be different and involve a conflict.

- Sometimes, communalism leads to the belief that people belonging to different religions cannot live as equal citizens within one nation. Either one of them has to dominate the rest, or they have to form different nations.

19. State any four provisions of the Indian Constitution which makes it a secular state.

Ans. (i) No official religion : There is no official religion of the Indian state. Unlike the status of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, Islam in Pakistan and Hinduism in Nepal, our Constitution does not give a special status to any religion.

(ii) Fundamental Rights : Under the Right To Freedom of Religion, our Constitution provides to all citizens freedom to profess, practice and propagate any religion, or not to follow any. Under the Cultural and Educational Right, our Constitution prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion.

(iii) Equality : The Constitution allows the state to intervene in the matters of religion in order to ensure equality within religious communities. To ensure equality, untouchability has been banned.

(iv) Intervention of the state within religious communities : The Constitution allows the state to intervene in the matters of religion in order to ensure equality within the different religious communities.

20. “The focus on caste in politics can sometimes give an impression that elections are all about caste and nothing else. That is far from true.” Explain by giving examples.

Ans. (i) Constituencies are a mixture of people belonging to different castes :

No parliamentary constituency in the country has a clear majority of one single caste. So, every candidate and party needs to win the confidence of more than one caste and community to win elections.

(ii) Different choices even within caste : No party wins the votes of all the voters of a caste or community because even within the community, people have different choices. When people say that a caste is a ‘vote bank’ of one party, it usually means that about two-thirds of the voters of that community.

(iii) Hunt for a dominating caste : Most of the political parties may put up candidates from the majority caste. But even this cannot guarantee their victory because some voters have more than one candidate from their castes, while many voters have no candidate from their castes.

History of elections : According to history of Indian elections, the ruling party and the sitting Member of the Parliament (MP) or Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) frequently lose elections in our country. This proves that though casteism and communalism play a major role in politics, but elections are not about caste and communalism.

21. What forms can caste take in politics ?

OR

Explain any four forms of casteism in Indian Politics.

OR

Explain the role of caste in Indian politics.

OR

Explain any three forms of caste politics in India.

Ans. (i) While choosing candidates : 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 get necessary support to win elections. (

(ii) While forming a government : When the governments are formed, political parties usually take care that representatives of different castes and tribes find a place in it.

(iii) While campaigning : Political parties and candidates in elections make appeals to people to give them their votes on the basis of caste. Some political parties are known to favour some

castes, and are seen as their representatives. .

(iv) Universal adult franchise and the principle of one-person-one-vote, has compelled the political leaders to raise the caste-based issues during elections. They do so to mobilise and secure political support. It also brought new consciousness among the people of castes that were hitherto treated as inferior and low.

22. 'Politics too influences the caste system.' Explain.

OR

In what ways does politics influence caste system?

OR

How caste is politicised? Explain any three points.

Ans. Politics too influences the caste system and caste identities by bringing them into the political arena. Thus, it is not politics that gets caste-ridden, it is the caste that gets politicised. Politics in caste normally takes the following forms :

- (i) **Wide base :** Each caste tries to widen its base to gain majority. Each caste group tries to become bigger by incorporating within it, the neighbouring castes or sub-castes which were earlier excluded from it.
- (ii) **Coalition :** Various caste groups are required to enter into a coalition with other castes or communities, and thus enter into a dialogue and negotiation. This strengthens the basic structure of democracy.
- (iii) **New groups :** New kinds of caste groups have come up in the political arena like 'backward' and 'forward' caste groups.

23. What forms does communalism take in politics?

OR

Define communalism as an ideology. Explain the forms of communalism in politics.

Answer:

Communalism is a strong sense of belonging to particular community especially a religious community, which often leads to extreme behavior or violence towards others. It cannot tolerate and respect people belonging to different religious communities.

There are different forms of communalism in politics as follows.

- **Communalism in everyday beliefs:** It is the most common form of communalism and can be in the form of religious prejudices, stereotypes of religious communities and belief that one religion is superior to other religions.
- **Communalism as Majoritarian Dominance and Political Dominance:** A communal mind often leads to quest for political dominance of one's own religious community. For people belonging to the majority community this comes out as 'Majoritarian dominance' for those belonging to the minority community, it can take form of a desire to form a separate political unit.
- **Communalism as political mobilisation:** Political mobilisation on religious lines is another frequent form of communalism. This involves the use of sacred symbols, emotional appeals and plain fear in order to bring the followers of one religion together in political arena.
- **Communalism in the form of communal violence:** Sometimes, communalism takes its most ugly form of communal violence, riots and massacre. For instance, India and Pakistan suffered some of the worst communal riots at the time of the partition.
To sum up, it can be said that communalism leads to the belief that people belonging to different religions cannot live as equal citizens within one nation. Either one of them has to dominate the rest or they have to form different nations.

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