

Vidya Bhawan Balika Vidyapeeth

Shakti utthan Ashram Lakhisarai

Class: Xth      Subject: Political science

Study Material :

Chapter:4 Gender Religion And Caste

In the previous chapter, you have learned that Political expression of social differences is possible and sometimes quite desirable in a democratic system. In Chapter 4 of Class 10 Political Science, you will study 3 kinds of social differences based on gender, religion and caste that can take the form of social divisions and inequalities. In each case, you look at the nature of the division in India and how it gets expressed in politics.

Gender and Politics

The gender division tends to be understood as natural and unchangeable. It is not based on biology but on social expectations and stereotypes.

Public/Private Division

The result of this division of labour is that though women constitute half of humanity, their role in public life, especially politics, is minimal in most societies. Earlier, only men were allowed to participate in public affairs, vote and contest for public offices. Gradually the gender issue was raised in politics. It demanded to enhance the political and legal status of women and improve their educational and career opportunities. The movements which were raised by women to get equality in personal and family life are called Feminist movements.

The political expression of gender division and political mobilisation helped to improve women's role in public life. As India is a male-dominated, PATRIARCHAL society, women face disadvantage, discrimination and oppression in various ways:

The literacy rate among women is only 54 per cent compared with 76 per cent among men. On an average, an Indian woman works one hour more than an average man every day and yet much of her work is not paid. The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 provides that equal wages should be paid to equal work.

In India, sex-selective abortion led to a decline in child sex ratio (number of girl children per thousand boys).

Urban areas have become particularly unsafe for women.

Women's Political Representation

Issues related to women are not given adequate attention. This has led many feminists and women's movements to the conclusion that unless women control power, their problems will not get adequate attention. In India, the percentage of elected women members in Lok Sabha touched 12 percent of its total strength for the first time in 2014. Their share in the state assemblies is less than 5 per cent.

One way to solve women's problem is to have a fair proportion of women in the elected bodies. In Panchayats and Municipalities, one-third of seats in local government bodies are reserved for women. Now there are more than 10 lakh elected women representatives in rural and urban local bodies. Gender division is an example that some form of social division needs to be expressed in politics. This also shows that disadvantaged groups do benefit when social divisions become a political issue.