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Q1(e)

Religious pluralism and social solidarity.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2023 · Anthropology GS 2 · 10 marks · Linguistic and religious minorities and their social, political and economic status.

5.2 Linguistic and religious minorities and their social, political and economic status.

Core demand of the question

- Write a note on religious pluralism and social solidarity
- Define both terms for Indian society
- Show how many religions can support solidarity and when they fail
- Keep the note within a 10-mark length

Revision summary

Religious pluralism is several faiths sharing one public life.

Social solidarity is the cooperation that **Durkheim** split into likeness and interdependence.

Srinivas, Madan, and Vidyarthi show local mixing in village, Islam, and pilgrimage towns.

The Constitution protects practice; **Gandhi** treated unity as political work.

Ambedkar showed that caste can block solidarity even inside a plural society.

Introduction

Religious pluralism is the public fact of several religions sharing one society. Social solidarity is the bonding that lets people cooperate. In India the two meet in villages, towns, and the Constitution.

Body**Pluralism as a social fact**

- Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian, Jain, Buddhist, and tribal faiths share territory, markets, and often kinship neighbourhoods.
- **M. N. Srinivas** showed that village festivals can include several jatis; **Imtiaz Ahmad** and **T. N. Madan** showed that Indian Islam and everyday Hindu-Muslim living are also local, not only textual.
- **Ashis Nandy** and **Gandhi** treated lived pluralism as neighbourly practice, not only as a census of communities.
- The Constitution's **Articles 25-28** protect profession and practice, which is the legal form of pluralism.

Solidarity

- **Emile Durkheim** distinguished mechanical solidarity of likeness from organic solidarity of interdependence. Indian towns mix both: caste and faith blocs, plus market and office interdependence.

- Shared work, **jajmani** remnants, and urban trade can bind unlike faiths. **L. P. Vidyarthi**'s sacred complex shows pilgrimage towns hosting many sects in one geography.
- **M. K. Gandhi** used Hindu-Muslim unity as a political form of solidarity. **B. R. Ambedkar** warned that caste inside Hinduism can block solidarity even when many religions exist.

When pluralism does not produce solidarity

- Riot, conversion panic, and unequal citizenship turn plurality into ranked blocs.
- Solidarity then needs law, shared livelihood, and local peace institutions, not only festival photographs.

Flow diagram

Many religions -> Law Articles 25 to 28
Many religions -> Village town pilgrimage
Village town pilgrimage -> Solidarity
Riot and ranked blocs -> Broken solidarity

Conclusion

India is religiously plural by history and by law. Solidarity grows where work, neighbourhood, and equal citizenship hold. It fails when faith is used as a bloc against neighbours.

Facts & figures

Articles 25-28

Constitutional protection of freedom of religion, religious institutions, and limits on compulsory religious tax in state schools.

Emile Durkheim

Mechanical solidarity of likeness and organic solidarity of specialised interdependence, used to read Indian mixing.

T. N. Madan

Wrote on religion in India as lived plurality, including secularism as a political arrangement among faiths.

L. P. Vidyarthi

Sacred-complex model showing how a pilgrimage city organises many specialists and sects in one place.

B. R. Ambedkar

Argued that caste inequality prevents real social solidarity even when many religions are legally free.

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