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Q4(b)

How do you understand the 'minority' question ? Examine the violence and discrimination against the religious minorities in India

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2019 · Sociology GS 2 · 20 marks · Religion and Society

Religion and Society: Religious communities in India; Problems of religious minorities.

Core demand of the question

- How do you understand the 'minority' question? Examine the violence and discrimination against the religious minorities in India

Revision summary

Minority is a power relation, not only a smaller headcount.

Constitutional rights sit beside ranked religious honour.

Riots and 1984-type pogroms are spectacular failures of equal protection.

Sachar-type lags show discrimination in education, credit and jobs.

Women face a double bind of community and majoritarian control.

Introduction

The minority question is not only arithmetic. It is how a smaller religious community holds security, dignity, and equal citizenship when the majority's culture is treated as the nation.

Body

Understanding 'minority'

- Constitutionally, minorities are communities that need cultural and educational rights, not second-class status.
- **Sociologically, minority is a power relation:** numbers plus stigma plus state practice. Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, and Parsis are not one wound.
- **Beteille's disharmonic structure fits:** secular equality as value, ranked religious honour as fact.
- Ghurye's Hindu civilisational whole can turn the minority into an outsider inside the nation.

Violence

- Riots, targeted killings, and rumour economies make Muslims and Christians into a feared other. Police delay is part of the violence.
- 1984 anti-Sikh pogroms showed that a 'majority' state can fail a minority spectacularly.
- Everyday intimidation around diet, dress, and worship is low-intensity violence that ghettoes life.

Discrimination

- **Sachar**-type evidence showed Muslim lag in education, credit, and public employment in many states, class and identity together.
- Housing markets, school bias, and job screening reproduce exclusion without a riot.
- Minority women face community control and majoritarian suspicion at once.

What follows

- Equal protection, riot justice, and fair development are the civic answer.
- Treating the minority as a permanent suspect is the sociological core of the question.

Flow diagram

Minority as power relation -> Riot everyday intimidation
Minority as power relation -> Sachar lag housing jobs
Constitutional equality -> Remedy if enforced

Conclusion

The minority question is equal citizenship under stigma. Violence and discrimination against religious minorities in India show that numbers do not guarantee safety. Law names equality; organisation of fear still decides the street.

Facts & figures

Sachar Committee

Documented socio-economic lag of Muslims as a public problem.

1984

Anti-Sikh mass violence that defined minority insecurity after Indira **Gandhi**'s assassination.

Articles 29-30

Cultural and educational rights of minorities in the Constitution.

Disharmonic order

Beteille's frame: equality as creed, ranked honour as practice.