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Q1(e)

Caste-like formations are present in Non-Hindu religious communities as well. Discuss with examples

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2021 · Sociology GS 2 · 10 marks · Religion and Society

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

Core demand of the question

- Caste-like formations are present in Non-Hindu religious communities as well. Discuss with examples
- Keep the note to a 10-mark length

Revision summary

Non-Hindu communities often keep birth-rank, endogamy and honour.

Muslim Ashraf-Ajlaf-Arzal and **Pasmanda** politics are a clear case.

Dalit Christians and ranked Sikh groups show the same split of creed and practice.

Kinship systems carry caste across religion.

Sachar lag is socio-economic, not a proof that Islam created caste.

Introduction

Conversion and a different scripture do not automatically erase birth-rank. Non-Hindu communities in India often reproduce endogamy, honour, and occupational closure that sociologists read as caste-like.

Body

Islam

- Ashraf, Ajlaf, and Arzal rankings, and the **Pasmanda** claim, show hierarchy among Muslims despite a creed of brotherhood.
- The **Sachar Committee** documented educational and job lag that is not explained by faith alone; caste-like closure and class sit together.

Christianity and Sikhism

- Syrian Christian status and Dalit Christian experience in the south show church membership with ranked marriage markets.
- Mazhabi and other Sikh groups meet a similar gap between Khalsa equality and social practice.

Why it persists

- Kinship endogamy, as Karve's regional systems would predict, travels across religion.
- **Srinivas's Sanskritization has cousins:** communities copy locally higher styles without leaving ranked marriage.

- Law can treat personal status by religion, as debates after **Shah Bano** showed, while everyday rank stays a jati fact.

Flow diagram

Religious conversion -> Doctrine of equality

Kinship endogamy -> Caste-like rank

Caste-like rank -> Muslim Pasmada

Caste-like rank -> Dalit Christians

Caste-like rank -> Mazhabi Sikhs

Conclusion

Caste-like formations among Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, and others show that Indian hierarchy is a social structure of birth and marriage, not only a Hindu theology. Examples of equality in doctrine do not cancel endogamy on the ground.

Facts & figures

Pasmada

Backward and Dalit Muslim self-description against Ashraf dominance.

Sachar Committee

Mapped Muslim educational and employment lag without treating the community as one caste.

Dalit Christians

Church members who still face untouchability-like exclusion in many localities.

Shah Bano

Personal-law conflict that showed religion as legal identity while gender and community rank stayed in play; not a caste census.