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# Supreme Court Ruling on SC/ST Benefits After Religious Conversion

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The Supreme Court of India has ruled that a person who converts to a religion other than Hinduism, Sikhism, or Buddhism cannot claim Scheduled Caste (SC) status or related benefits. The Court upheld an earlier High Court judgment and clarified that caste-based protections are legally linked to specific religions under existing constitutional provisions.

## Key Observations of the Court

Conversion to religions like Christianity or Islam leads to immediate loss of SC status, irrespective of birth.

A person cannot simultaneously follow another religion and claim SC identity, as both are legally incompatible.

SC benefits such as reservation and protection under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 are not available after such conversion.

## Position of Scheduled Tribes (STs)

Unlike SCs, Scheduled Tribe (ST) status is not strictly religion-based.

ST recognition depends on:

Tribal customs and way of life

Social acceptance by the tribal community

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If conversion leads to loss of tribal identity and community ties, ST benefits may also be affected.

### **Constitutional & Legal Basis**

Governed by the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950

SC status is restricted to Hindus (1950), Sikhs (1956), and Buddhists (1990 amendment)

Linked to Article 341 of the Indian Constitution, which empowers the President to specify SC communities

### **Significance of the Judgment**

Reinforces the religion-linked nature of SC status in India

Clarifies long-standing legal ambiguity regarding conversion and reservation benefits

Has implications for reservation policies, affirmative action, and social justice debates

### **Additional Facts**

SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989: Provides legal protection against caste-based discrimination

Reservation System in India: Based on historical social disadvantage, not only economic criteria

Re-conversion Rule: A person may regain SC status only if:

Returns to original religion

Proves caste identity

Gains acceptance from the community