
**Religious Taxonomy of States and Districts in
India: An Analysis Using a Standardized
Index of Diversity (SID) of Religion**

Krishna Murthy Ponnappalli and Faujdar Ram



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INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR POPULATION SCIENCES
Mumbai, India
www.iipsindia.org

July 2010

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Design and Layout: Publication Unit, IIPS

Suggested Citation: Ponnappalli, Krishna Murthy and Ram, Faujdar 2010. " Religious Taxonomy of States and Districts in India: An Analysis Using a Standardized Index of Diversity (SID) of Religion." Working Paper No. 2, International Institute for Population Sciences, Mumbai.

IIPS Working Paper No. 2

Religious Taxonomy of States and Districts in India: An Analysis Using a Standardized Index of Diversity (SID) of Religion

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**: An earlier version of this paper was presented in the 26th International Population Conference of the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population (IUSSP), held at Marrakech, Morocco from 26 September to 3 October 2009.*

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Abstract

This study is an attempt to understand the religious convergence/divergence taking place in India and across its states and districts, by analysing the levels and trends using an index called Standardized Index of Diversity (SID). The index is constructed using the six major religious distribution of population in India. Analysing district level 2001 census datasets by religion using this SID index indicates that, all the 593 districts of India can be neatly divided into few clusters or groups, based on the concentration of the religious distribution of population. The result shows that according to Census 2001, in 390 districts of India Hindus are predominant and in 22 districts Muslims are in majority as compared to other religious groups prevailing in those districts. Other minority religious groups are found in majority in the remaining districts, which are situated at the peripheral areas of India.

Introduction

Based on the religious compositions, India's population is sub-divided into Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, Jains, Muslims, Sikhs and 'Other' religious group, which includes Parsis, Jewish populations, Tribal religions and so on. Further, in every census the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India, customarily present another group of population called 'Religion not stated'. Many historians, demographers and social scientists generally show their interest in studying only the first six categories of religion as stated above, because almost 99 percent of the total population of India falls into one of these six categories. These six religions are recognised as 'Major Religious Groups' of India. According to the 2001 census among these six religions, in terms of numbers, Hindus occupy the first position,

Muslims occupy the second, Christians occupy the third, and then Sikhs, Buddhists, and Jains take the fourth, fifth and sixth positions respectively (Banthia, 2004). However, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and Jains communities are considered as 'Minority Religious Groups', as their number when compared to that of Hindus in India as a whole, is observed to be less than 20 percent. Hence, the Section 2(c) of the National Commission for Minorities Act, 1992 of India recognises the following religious groups as 'Minority communities': Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and Zoroastrians (Parsis).

It is of the opinion in some circles that 'one day', all Hindus in India will be outnumbered by Muslims as a majority religious group. It is noted from the census figures that while on one hand the proportion of Hindus are declining over the years, on the other hand, the proportion of Muslims is increasing continuously since 1901 (Joshi et al., 2003, 2005).

A vital report on 'Social, economic and educational status of the Muslim community of India' published by the Prime Minister's High Level Committee in November 2006 (Prime Minister's High Level Committee, 2006) highlights the following interesting points about Muslims in India in its Chapter three:

- (i) "India's Muslim population is amongst the largest in the world, exceeded only by Indonesia's and close to the Muslim populations of Pakistan and Bangladesh. Moreover, it is larger than the total populations of many countries of the world."
- (ii) The Muslim population of India enumerated as 138 million in the year 2001 by the census of India would have crossed 150 million mark by the year 2006, the time by which the report was prepared.
- (iii) Though Muslim population has increased in India from 47 million in 1961 to 138 million in 2001, it has risen by less than one percent point a decade during the above four decades. Further, the growth rate of Muslims during 1991-2001 seemed to be declining in many states of India.
- (iv) As a consequence of a continuous decline in fertility and also with an improvement in the mortality conditions over the decades, the population growth of Muslims in India has slowed down. As a result Muslims are also well into the demographic transition. The role of migration in the overall growth of the Muslim population in India is observed to be very small.

- (v) To the question on whether the Muslim population could become the largest group in India, the report states, "one could say that the Muslim population share is expected to rise from the current level but not expected to be much above 20 percent by the end of the century." (Prime Minister's High Level Committee, 2006: 46).

Thus we proposed to study the convergence/divergence taking place in these major religions of India, using the latest census figures on religion reported by the 2001 Indian census. The major objective of this paper is to understand the religious convergence/divergence taking place in India, and across its States and Districts by means of analyzing levels and trends using an index called Standardized Index of Diversity (SID) of religion. This index was constructed by using the religious distribution of population observed in six major religions of India namely, Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and Jains that consists of more than 90 percent of the population of India, as stated earlier.

Data and Methods

The main sources of data for the present study are the data sets of various decennial censuses conducted by the Registrar General of India over time -from census 1901 to census 2001. This study however, extensively uses the data on religion given in the 2001 census. Diversity in the religious composition of population is studied by means of indicators like absolute figures, percentages and especially the Standardized Index of Diversity (SID) of religion. Wherever it is appropriate the results of the analysis are presented diagrammatically by means of bar charts, line graphs and map.

The 'Standardized Index of Diversity (SID) of religion' was developed, using the formula which was earlier suggested by Lieberman (1969) and further given in Rowland (2003). This index was calculated as:

$$\text{Standardized Index of Diversity (SID)} = [1 - ((P_H)^2 + (P_M)^2 + (P_C)^2 + (P_S)^2 + (P_B)^2 + (P_J)^2)] / [1 - (1/6)]$$

Where:

P_H = Proportion of Hindus in the total population

P_M = Proportion of Muslims in the total population

P_C = Proportion of Christians in the total population

P_S = Proportion of Sikhs in the total population

P_B = Proportion of Buddhists in the total population

P_J = Proportion of Jains in the total population

$$P_H + P_M + P_C + P_S + P_B + P_J = 1.0$$

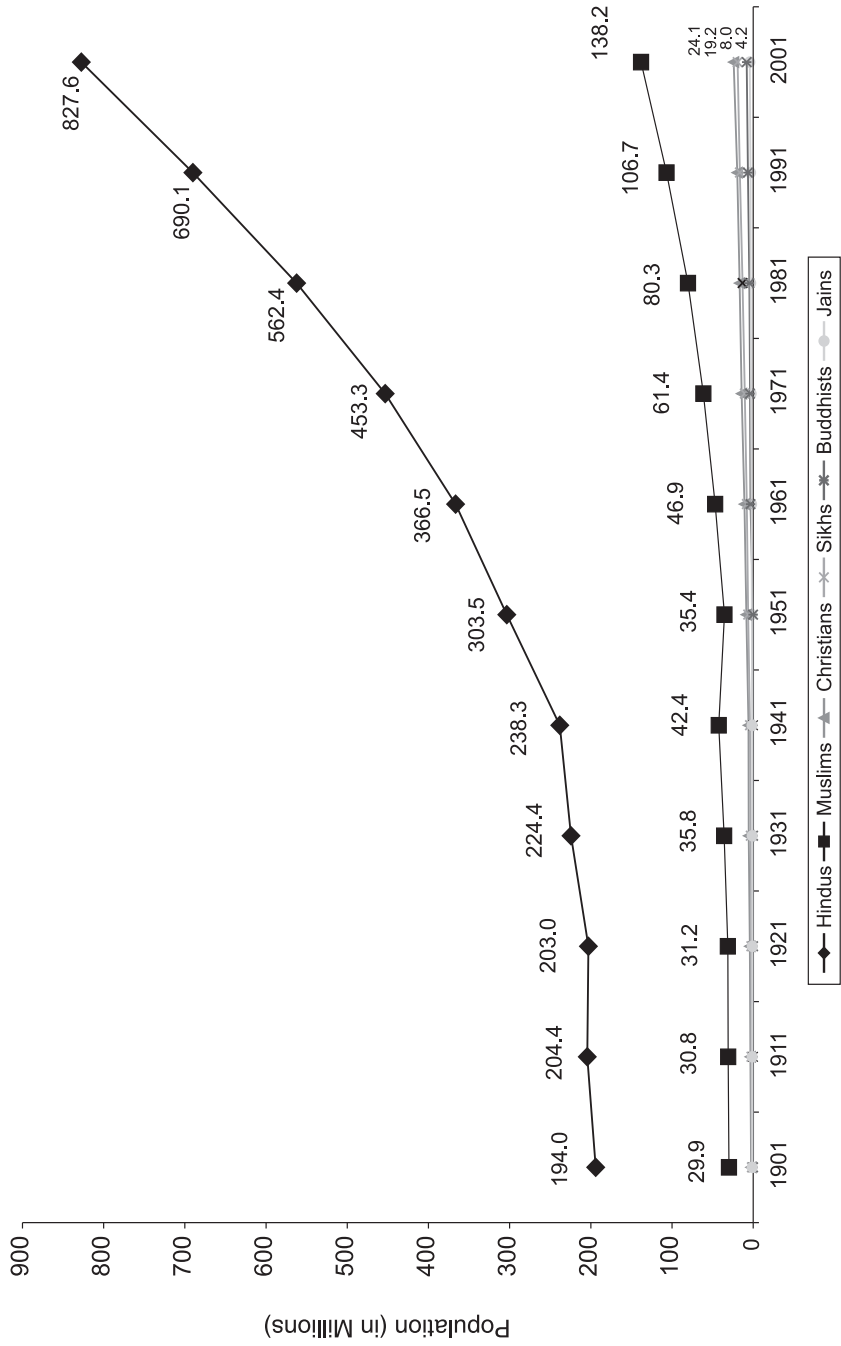
According to Lieberman (1969: 860) the above standardized index "describes the actual level of diversity as a proportion of the maximum level possible with the specified number of categories" (see Rowland, 2003).

Our newly constructed SID index is standardized and comprised of the six major religious groups of India, and varies between 1 and 0. For example, if everyone in the population is of one religion, say, Hindu religious group (i.e. if $P_H=1.0$ and $P_M = P_C = P_S = P_B = P_J = 0$), then the index will be equal to '0'. The index will be equal to '1', if the total population is evenly distributed between all religions in India - Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, and Jains (when $P_H = P_M = P_C = P_S = P_B = P_J = 1.0$)

[Note: First, the index of diversity within a population is calculated as $ID = [1 - ((P_H)^2 + (P_M)^2 + (P_C)^2 + (P_S)^2 + (P_B)^2 + (P_J)^2)]$. Secondly, the potential maximum value of the index of Diversity (ID) is calculated as: $1 - (1/6)$. Finally, the SID is obtained simply by taking the ratio as: $ID / (\text{Maximum ID})$. Standardizing the Index thus facilitate the comparison, even if the number of categories are different from one population to the other. In the present study we fixed the categories as six religions, thus even without standardization we may achieve the goal of comparison, but in that case the index may not vary between '0' and '1'. Thus standardizing allows us to keep the index value between '0' and '1'. The disadvantage with this standardized index is that it can disguise real differences between populations when the categories change from one population to the other that are in comparison. (See Rowland, 2003)]

The results of our analysis are presented in three different sections. In section one an attempt is made to discuss about the composition, distribution and growth of India's population in terms of the division of population by various major religious groups between 1901 and 2001. In section two, diversity in the religious distribution of population is explored by discussing the trends in the standardized index of diversity of religion at the state level over the forty years from 1961 to 2001. In section three, diversity in the religious distribution

Fig. 1. Religious Distribution of Population in India, 1901 to 2001



Source of data: Roy, 1989; Banthia, 2004; and Premi, 2004

of the population is presented at district level using the results of the diversity index constructed by using the 2001 census distribution of the population by religion.

RESULTS

I. Religious Composition, Distribution and Growth of India's Population: 1901 - 2001

Figure 1 below shows graphically the numerical growth of each of the six major religions in India, from 1901 to 2001.

The observation of Figure 1 reveals the following:

- (i) In the census year 1901, while Hindus accounted for 194 million and Muslims accounted for only 29.9 million. Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and Jains accounted for 2.6 million, 1.7 million, 1.3 million and 0.1 million respectively. When compared to Hindus, Muslims and Christians, the numerical strength displayed by other religious groups seem to be negligible, for India.
- (ii) In the census year 2001, Hindus accounted for 827.6 million and Muslims accounted for 138.2 million. Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and Jains accounted for 24.1 million, 19.2 million, 8.0 million and 4.2 million respectively.
- (iii) All the religious groups have shown a continuous increase in their population over the census years, from 1901 to 2001.
- (iv) In absolute terms, over the past 100 year's period, while the number of Hindus increased by 633.6 million, Muslims increased by 108.3 million, and Christians and Sikhs increased to 21.4 million, 17.6 million respectively. Also, Buddhists and Jains who come next to the above religions in numerical strength increased by 7.8 million and 2.9 million respectively.
- (v) Further it is seen that during 1941-51, while Hindus have increased by about 65.2 millions, Muslims have declined by about 7.0 million during the same period. Evidence shows that this increase and decrease in the respective populations are mainly due to the partition of the then erstwhile India, into Pakistan and India in the year 1947. This historical event made many Muslims and Hindus to move into the

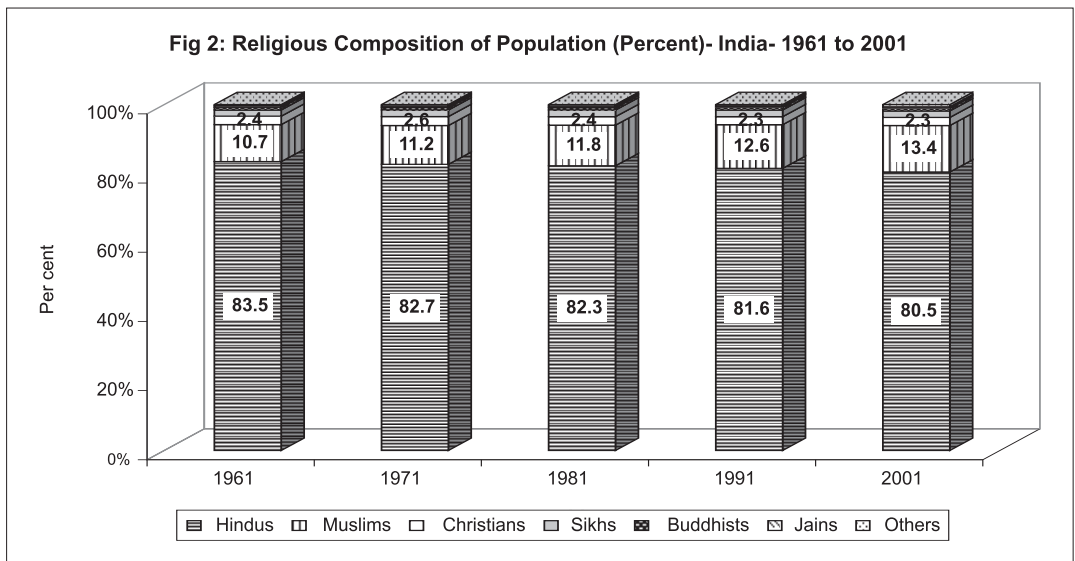
East Pakistan (present Pakistan) and West Pakistan (present Bangladesh). And similarly during 1947, a considerable number of Hindus and Muslims opted to move into India from both East and West Pakistan areas (See Roy, 1989:383-385).

- (vi) The numerical growth of Buddhists and Jains was interchanged during the year 1961. That is, the number of Buddhist population has increased abruptly to a higher level than that of Jains during 1951-61. Earlier research studies show that migration of Buddhists from Tibet into India during the period 1950-61, and also the mass conversion of low caste Hindus into Neo-Buddhism resulted into the increase in the Neo-Buddhist population in Maharashtra state during the 1951- 61 period. These have made a considerable contribution for a sudden rise of Buddhists during 1951- 61 in the country. (See Roy, 1989)

The above analysis based on Figure 1 clearly reveals that from the beginning, Hindus are predominantly more when compared to other religious groups in India.

Figure 2 presents the religious composition of India's population in percent terms for the census years from 1961 to 2001.

Figure 2 shows that, however Hindu is the predominant religion in India, its proportional growth over the years seems to be reducing successively and relatively, when compared to

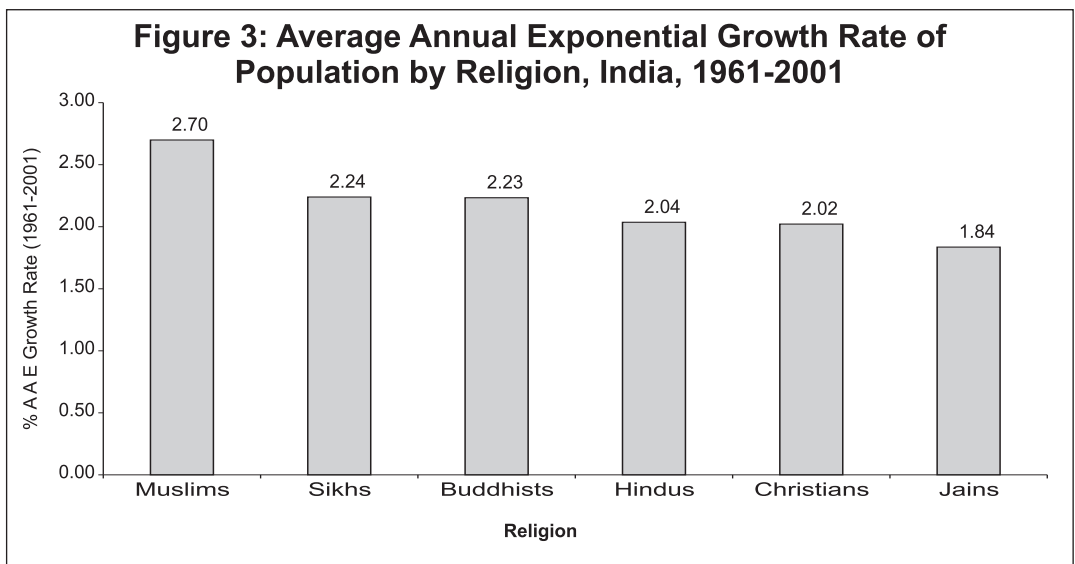


other religions. The proportional growth of Muslims is increasing over the years, successively and relatively, compared to all other religions of India. The proportion of Hindus has declined from 83.5 percent in the year 1961 to 80.5 percent by the year 2001, thus showing a decline of 3 percent points. On the contrary, the proportion of Muslims has increased from 10.7 percent in 1961 to 13.4 percent in the year 2001, showing an increase of 2.7 percent points during this period.

The percent average annual exponential growth rate was calculated for the entire period of 40 years for each of the major religions. They are presented by means of bar diagrams in Figure 3 by their descending order of growth rate.

Figure 3 indicates that the exponential growth rate of Muslims is higher than any other religions in India, whereas the same for Jains is the lowest. The growth rate of Hindus occupied the fourth position in the descending order.

Thus, all these evidences clearly show that Muslims followed by other minority religions of India are increasing over the years. However, when compared to other religious groups, the growth rate of Hindus is declining during this period. Ram Kumar's (1975) study also states that there is diversity (convergence) in the distribution of various religions in India.



II. Religious taxonomy of states in India

Figure 4 presents the standardized index of diversity (SID) of religion for India as a whole and for various states and union territories in India for the census years from 1961 to 2001.

Figure 4 reveals that

- i. The SID index varies from a level of 0.3421 in 1961 to 0.3888 in 2001 at all India level. An increase in the index value in the successive census years clearly shows that in India, in general, the diversity in the religious distribution of population is increasing over time.
- ii. An observation of variations in the SID index value for different states over time reveals that: when compared with 1961, the index values of various states have increased to some extent by 2001; however, we may notice some fluctuations in the index value in some states. The exceptions to the above are Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat. In Andhra Pradesh the index value has declined slightly from 0.2532 to 0.2363 during 1961 to 2001, but, there is an increase in the index value for the year 1971. In case of Gujarat, we may notice a rise in the index value from 0.2289 in 1991 to 0.2351 in 2001, however it seem to have declined slightly from 0.2395 in 1961 to 0.2351 in 2001. As stated earlier, in overall the analysis gives the indication that over the years from 1961 to 2001 different major states in India have experienced an increase in the diversity of their religious distribution of population.

The above findings strengthen the views of other studies carried out earlier, that in different states of India over the years minority groups are strengthening their hold at a loss of a little proportion of the Hindus being converted into other religions or a little proportion of other minority religious people joining the main stream of the population of the different states in India from the neighboring countries like Bangladesh and Pakistan by means of international migration or emigration (Premi, 2004).

III. Religious Taxonomy of Districts in India

Few preliminary steps were followed in studying religious taxonomy of districts in India. They are as follows:

As a first step, we have computed the Standardized Index of Diversity (SID) of Religion for each of the district in India for the year 2001, using the only information on the proportion of

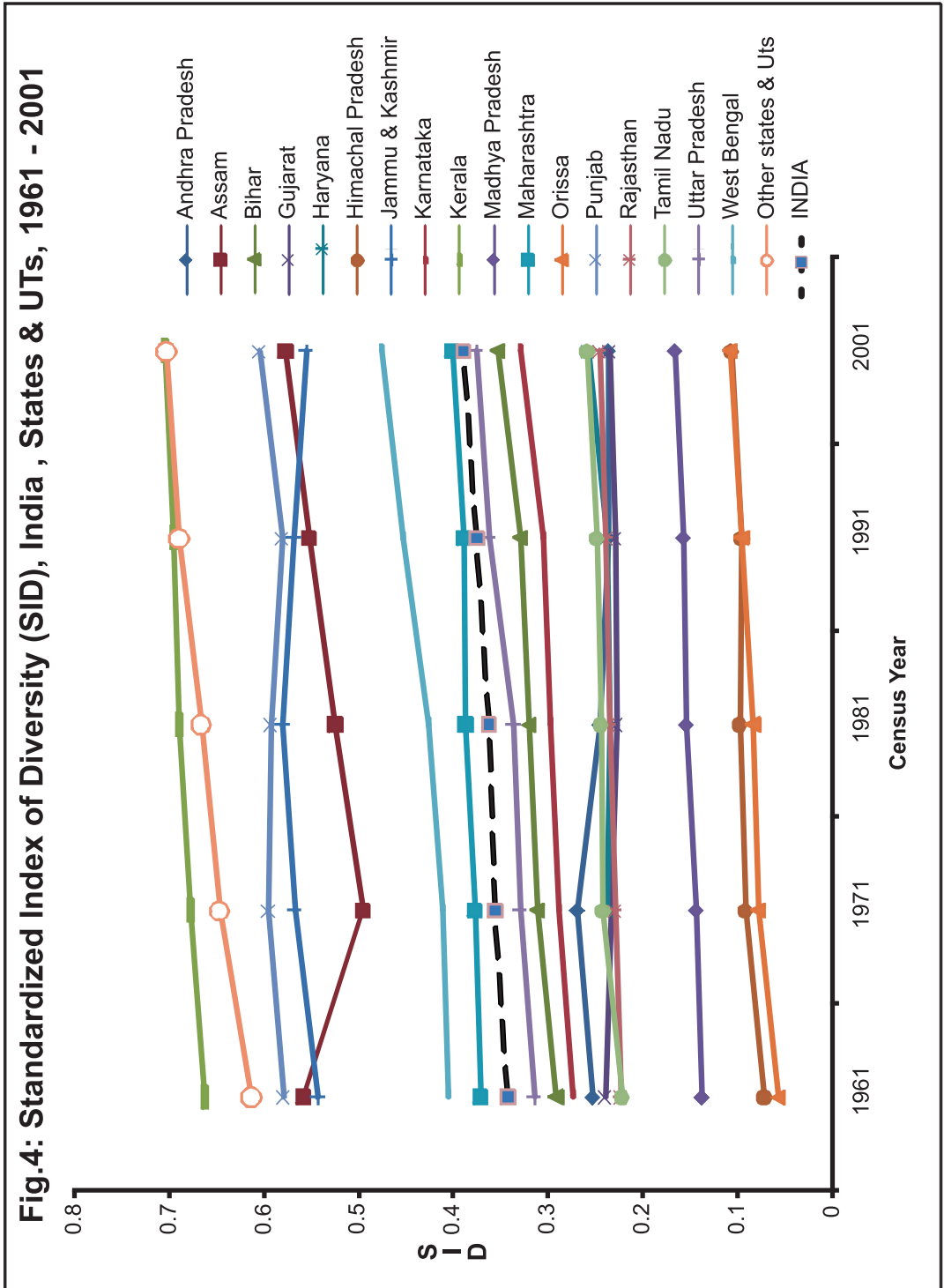


Table 1: Distribution of Districts in Various States of India by the Predominant Religious Status, 2001

States and Union Territories in India	Total Districts	Number of districts with their predominant religion					
		Hindus (>80%)	Hindus (< 80%)	Muslims	Christians	Sikhs	Buddhists
Major States							
Andhra Pradesh	23	22	1				
Assam	23	7	10	6			
Bihar	37	30	6	1			
Gujarat	25	23	2				
Haryana	19	17	2				
Himachal Pradesh	12	10	1				1
Jammu Kashmir	14	2	1	10			1
Karnataka	27	22	5				
Kerala	14		13	1			
Madhya Pradesh	45	44	1				
Maharashtra	35	22	13				
Orissa	30	28	2				
Punjab	17		4			13	
Rajasthan	32	30	2				
Tamil Nadu	30	25	5				
Uttar Pradesh	70	49	20	1			
West Bengal	18	6	10	2			
Jharkhand	18	11	7				
Chhattisgarh	16	15	1				
Uttaranchal	13	11	2				
Smaller States							
Arunachal Pradesh	13		7		4		2
Goa	2		2				
Tripura	4	3	1				
Manipur	9	2	2		5		
Mizoram	8				7		1
Meghalaya	7				7		
Nagaland	8				8		
Sikkim	4		3				1
Union Territories							
Andaman & Nicobar	2		1		1		
Chandigarh	1		1				
Dadra Nagar Haveli	1	1					
Daman & Diu	2	2					
Delhi	9	6	3				
Lakshadweep	1			1			
Pondicherry	4	2	2				
Total Districts	593	390	130	22	32	13	6

Data Source: Census of India, 2001

population in various major religions namely: Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and Jains.

Secondly, we have prepared a table (not shown separately) that shows the SID value along with the religious proportion of population that ranked 1st, 2nd and 3rd in that particular district. An SID value 0.006 may tell you that majority of the population of a particular district may belong to a particular predominant religion, but it may not specify whether it is a Hindu religion, or a Muslim religion or so on. So we find it is necessary to state along with the index value the first one or two or three predominant religions of the district, for a better understanding of the index.

Finally, with the help of the SID value and the religious proportion of population that ranked 1st, 2nd and 3rd in that particular district, we tried to see whether we can neatly classify and also rank order the districts in India into different predominant religious groups.

Ranking of the 593 districts in India by the SID value, considering along with it the first three predominant religious populations in percent terms of each district, made it possible for us to realize at once that we could divide the 593 districts into six different meaningful categories, namely: (i) those 390 districts where the proportion of Hindu population is more than 80 percent, (ii) those 130 districts where the proportion of Hindu population is less than 80 percent but predominantly Hindu, (iii) those 22 districts where the proportion of Muslims are predominant, (iv) those 32 districts where the proportion of Christians are predominant, (v) those 13 districts where the proportion of Sikhs are predominant and (vi) those 6 districts where the proportion of Buddhists are predominant, in the total population of a district (See Table 1).

The observation of the SID values of 593 districts reveals that the SID value of 0.4000 divides these districts neatly into two categories, namely those districts where the proportion of the predominant population is above 80 percent and the proportion of the predominant population below 80 percent. It is to emphasize here that this can be possible only when the SID value is analyzed along with the percent of predominant religion in that particular district.

Map-1 displays the distribution of 593 districts in India with respect to their first predominant religion in its first rank, when considered the first three religions of a district, in percent terms, at the same time (Table 1). For example, Map-1 shows that Goalpara district in Assam has

Table 2: Predominantly Hindu districts (130) of India, Arranged by States and Second Most Dominant Religion after Hindus: 2001

States and Union Territories	Second most dominant religion in the district is ..			
	Muslims	Christians	Sikhs	Buddhists
Major States				
Andhra Pradesh	1			
Assam	9	1		
Bihar	6			
Gujarat	2			
Haryana	1		1	
Himachal Pradesh				1
Jammu and Kashmir	1			
Karnataka	5			
Kerala	6	7		
Madhya Pradesh	1			
Maharashtra	8			5
Orissa		2		
Punjab			4	
Rajasthan	1		1	
Tamil Nadu	1	4		
Uttar Pradesh	20			
West Bengal	9			1
Jharkhand	6	1		
Chhattisgarh		1		
Uttaranchal	2			
Smaller States				
Arunachal Pradesh		5		2
Goa		2		
Tripura	1			
Manipur	2			
Mizoram				
Meghalaya				
Nagaland				
Sikkim				3
Union Territories				
Andaman & Nicobar		1		
Chandigarh			1	
Dadar and Nagar Haveli				
Daman & Diu				
Delhi	3			
Lakshadweep				
Pondicherry	2			
Total number of districts	87	24	7	12

Data Source: Census of India, 2001

predominantly high Muslim population when compared to Hindus, Christians or other religious group population, because 53.77 percent of its population is observed to be of Muslims followed by Hindus (38.26 %) and Christians (7.88 %). Hence, the predominant religion here is observed to be Muslim. Anantnag of Jammu and Kashmir with an SID value of 0.0356 also comes under predominantly Muslim dominant district and as a matter of fact occupies the first rank among the Muslim dominant districts in India. The distribution of population in this district by the first three religions is as follows:, Muslims (98.5%), Hindus (0.99%) and Christians (0.47%).

The Hindus

The predominant status of Hindus in India need not be over emphasized but may be realized by looking at the position, districts of various states shown by their predominant religion in Table 1 and Map-1.

It is seen that about 390 districts in India with the proportion of Hindu population more than 80 percent, have an index value that lie in the range of 0.39947 (highest) and 0.00639 (lowest). In the group of 390 districts, two districts, namely Shahjahanpur (Uttar Pradesh) and Bardhaman (West Bengal) have the proportion of Hindu population of about 79.67 percent and 79.47 percent respectively. We considered them as equivalent to 80 percent and kept these two districts in the >80 percent category.

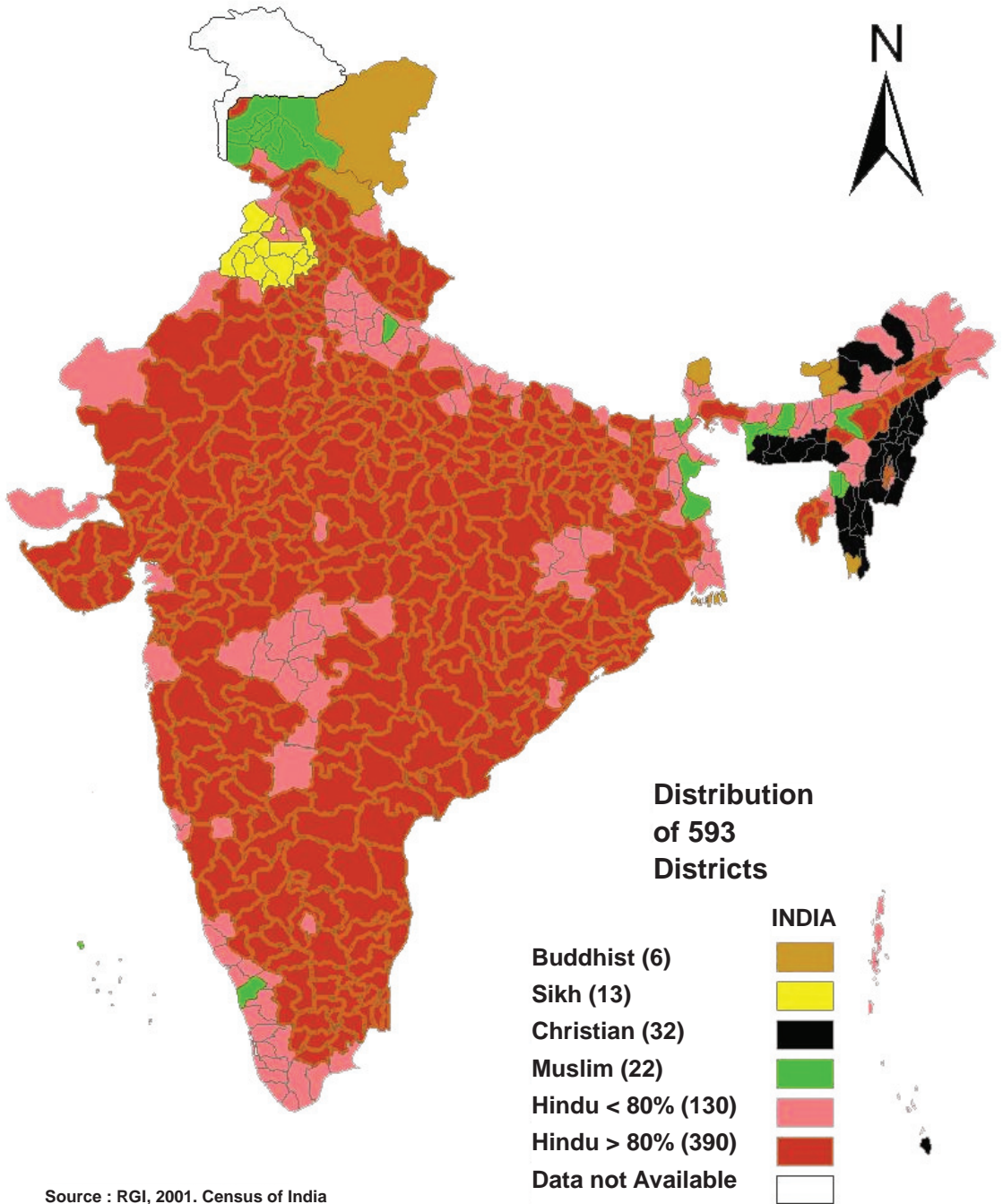
It is also observed that about 130 districts in India with the proportion of Hindus population less than 80 percent have an index value that lie in the range of 0.40191 and 0.79079. In

Table 3 : Distribution of the 593 districts of India by their rank, 1st, 2nd and 3rd major religious groups

(When among all the major religions that particular religion was occupying the 1st or 2nd or 3rd order in the particular district)

Rank Order	Hindus	Muslims	Christians	Sikhs	Buddhists	Jains	Total
1 st rank	520	22	32	13	6	0	593
2 nd Rank	67	423	55	20	28	0	593
3 rd Rank	6	121	213	96	62	95	593

Map. 1: Religious Distribution of Population, Districts in India, 2001



Source : RGI, 2001. Census of India

this category, three districts namely Thane (Maharashtra), Tirunelveli (Tamil Nadu) and Bangalore (Karnataka) have the proportion of Hindu population of 80.13 percent, 79.82 percent and 79.56 percent respectively. We considered these three districts under the category where the proportion of Hindu population is observed to be less than 80 percent, because their SID value lies above the cut of point of 0.4000.

Among the 390 districts, the district Baudh occupies the lowest rank with an index value of 0.00639, and belongs to the state of Orissa. About 99.73 percent of this Baudh's populations are of Hindus. While the percentage of Muslims that occupy the second rank with 0.2 percent, Christians occupy the third rank with a negligible percent of 0.06. And among the 390 districts, the district with the highest index value of 0.39947 belongs to the state Uttar Pradesh with the name Shahjahanpur. The proportion of Hindus in this district is of 79.67 percent, which we may be considered as of 80 percent. Muslims occupy the second position in this district with 17.87 percent. The third dominant religion in this district is Sikhs, with only of 2.11 percent to the total population of the district.

Among the 130 districts in India where the percent of Hindus is less than 80 percent to the total population, the SID value is seen to vary between 0.40191 in Sitamarhi (Bihar) and 0.79079 in Upper Siang (Arunachal Pradesh). While Sitamarahi has 78.74 percent of Hindu population, Upper Siang district has 45.04 percent of Hindu population to the total population of the district.

Among the 130 districts, with respect to the second most dominant religion, in 87 districts Muslims is the second dominant religion. While in 24 districts Christians seen to be the 2nd dominant religion, in 12 districts Buddhists is the second most dominant religion. In the remaining 7 districts Sikhs is the 2nd most dominant religion (Table 2).

In some of the 130 districts where the proportion of Hindu population is less than 80 percent, the position of the 2nd dominant religion is found to be very close to that of the first dominant religion, Hindus. In few districts the first and second dominant religions are close in their majority. It will not be surprising, that in these few districts, the present second dominant religion might become the first dominant religion by the next census of 2011. For example, we may point out the districts of Gurdaspur in Punjab, Gumla in Jharkhand, Kottayam in Kerala, Marigaon in Assam, where the second dominant religion is very close in proportional term with that of the first dominant religion.

Thus, among all the districts of India, in only 73 districts Hindus occupy the 2nd or 3rd rank order, when the first three religions of a district are arranged as 1st, 2nd and 3rd rank order. Out of these 73 districts, in 22 districts Muslims are with 1st rank order status and in 32 districts

Christians are with 1st rank order status. Similarly in 13 districts Sikhs are in 1st rank order and in the remaining six of the 73 districts Buddhists are with the 1st rank order status. (Tables 1, Table 3 and Map-1)

These districts, where the proportion of Hindus seems to be occupying the 2nd or 3rd rank order, are located at the peripheral areas of India (See Map-1). These districts (with the total number of districts given in brackets for each state) may be found in the bordering states, namely: Assam (6), Jammu and Kashmir (11), Punjab (13), West Bengal (2), Arunachal Pradesh (6), Manipur (5), Mizoram (8), Meghalaya (7), Nagaland (8). You may also find one district each in the following states: Bihar , Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Uttar Pradesh, Sikkim, Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Lakshdweep (Table 1)

When the 593 districts of India are ranked for their second dominant religion's position, we find that in 67 districts, Hindus occupy the second majority (2nd rank) religious status. Further, it is seen that out of the 593 districts, only in 6 districts they occupy the third majority (3rd rank) religious status (See Table 3).

The Muslims

As stated earlier, Muslims are on majority in only 22 of the districts that belong to only 7 states in India. Out of these, 6 districts belong to Assam and 10 districts belong to Jammu and Kashmir. Among the districts, Anantnag with an index value of 0.0356 and with Muslim population of 98.5 percent, gets the lowest rank, when the 22 districts are arranged in descending order of their SID value. Golpara in Assam state has the highest SID value of 0.6690 and Muslims in this district are seen to be of 53.8 percent. Table 3 indicates that among all districts in India, in 423 districts Muslims occupy the status of the second most dominant minority religion next to that of Hindus. Again, when we consider the 593 districts for the 3rd ranked religion, Muslims occupy the 3rd rank in only about 121 districts. Thus Muslims are the second largest religious group in India and also the first major minority group.

The Christians

As per Table1 and Map-1, the proportion of Christians is on a majority in 32 districts of India. Most of the districts where the Christians are on majority, belong to the smaller states namely Arunachal Pradesh (4 districts), Manipur (5 districts), Mizoram (7 districts), Meghalaya (7 districts) and Nagaland (8 districts). The remaining one district belongs to the Union Territory

of Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Interestingly all the districts where the Christians are more than all other religions (or in predominant position) belong to the states that are at the peripheral areas of India (See Map-1). Table 3 indicates that in 213 districts of India, Christians occupy the status of the 3rd most dominant religion next to that of Hindus and Muslims. Thus Christians are seen to be definitely the 3rd largest religious group in India and the 2nd dominant religious minority group coming next to that of Muslims.

The Sikhs

According to 2001 census, there were about 19.2 million Sikhs in India. (Figure 1). Among the major states, Punjab turns out to be the only state with a majority of Sikh population. Again, out of the 17 districts in Punjab in about 13 districts Sikhs are found to be in majority (See Map-1). While ranking the districts according to their index of diversity, we found Ferozpur as the district with the highest SID of 0.6177 indicating that Sikhs are in majority in this state but are the lowest when compared to other 12 districts where Sikhs are found to be in majority. The district of Moga is seen to be the district with the lowest diversity index value of 0.2949 among the 13 districts indicating that Sikhs are in majority in this state and are the highest in numerical strength when compared to the remaining 12 districts.

The Buddhists

There are six districts in India where Buddhists are seen to be in majority when compared to other religions (See Table 1 and Map-1). Interestingly while two of the districts belong to Arunachal Pradesh, the remaining belong to one each of the following states, namely: Sikkim, Mizoram, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir. All the above states are noticed to be in the peripheral areas of India.

The Jains

Unfortunately we cannot see even a single district in India where the proportion of Jains as the dominant religion.

Conclusion

Unlike other studies conducted in the recent past, the present study made an attempt to represent the distribution of population in India by religion, for the country as a whole and for each states and districts by means of an index called the Standardized Index of Diversity

(SID) of Religion. For constructing this index we have considered six of the major religions of India namely, Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, Sikhs and Jains. The SID of religion varies between 0 and 1 and this index equals to 1, only when the total population is evenly distributed among all the religions considered in constructing the index. The index will be 0, only when the total population is observed to be of one religion, that is, either Hindus, or Muslims or Christians or Buddhists or Sikhs or Jains.

An analysis of the 1961 to 2001 census data on religious distribution of population at state level by using the SID index value indicates that almost all the states (except, Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat) have experienced a rise in their index value from 1961 to 2001. Further it indicates that all the states have experienced diversity (by means of an increase in the proportion of minority group population over the last 40 years or so) in their religious distribution of population. An analysis of the 2001 census data by religion at the district level by means of this SID of Religion indicates that, all the 593 districts in India can be divided into few clusters or groups, based on the concentration of the religious distribution of population. According to our analysis, there were 390 districts in India in the year 2001 where Hindus are predominant (by 80 percent or more). And there were 130 districts where Hindus are predominant, but their proportion to the total population is found to be less than 80 percent. Our analysis shows that among the minority groups, there were 22 districts where Muslims are in majority when compared to other religions. Christians are predominant in 32 districts; Sikhs are predominant in 13 districts; and Buddhists are predominant in only 6 districts. Interestingly, all the districts where the minority religious group populations are found to be on majority are situated at the peripheral areas of the states in India. There is no single district where Jains are in majority. As already pointed by other researchers, we also found that among the minority communities Muslims are widely spread all over the Indian districts next to that of Hindus. Christians followed by Buddhists, Sikhs and Jains are found to be concentrated in some pockets of India only.

This study brings out the fact that, Muslims, the major group among minority religious populations in India, needs to be further studied separately by their socio-economic status in order to impart the benefits of development.

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Prof. F. Ram
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