SPATIAL PATTERNS OF THE POPULATIOIN CHARACTERISTICS OF MAJOR RELIGIOUS GROUPS OF INDIA

Doctoral Dissertation Abstract (2012)

Author: **Divjot Kaur**   Supervisor: **Dr. Gurinder Kaur**
Department of Geography, Punjabi University, Patiala (Punjab)

The present study analyses the population characteristics of each of the major religious groups of India. It is an attempt to obtain a fairly accurate picture of the relative strengths of different religious groups.

Objectives

The present study is an endeavour to ascertain the population characteristics of six major religious groups, viz. the Hindus, the Muslims, the Christians, the Sikhs, the Buddhists and the Jains. The specific objectives of the study are as under:

1. To examine the geographical distribution of major religious groups of India;
2. To compare and analyse the spatial patterns of growth of major religious groups;
3. To analyse spatial variations in the pattern of sex ratio of major religious groups;
4. To examine the level of literacy achieved by major religious groups;
5. To analyse the spatial pattern of work participation of the major religious groups;
6. To examine the age composition of the major religious groups and to analyse the spatial pattern of their dependency ratio; and
7. To provide valuable knowledge on various aspects of religious demography of India.

Methodology

The study is based on the data taken from the 2001 Census of India. This is the latest data available on the religious groups which appeared in the year 2004 only. In this context, it is pertinent to mention that the data produced in 2011 Census on religious groups by different districts of the country would be available only after its publication which may take a few more years.

The district has been employed as the basic unit of the study. There were 593 districts in the country in 2001. This number is good enough to have a detailed spatial analysis of various population characteristics of the major religious groups in the country.

The district-wise data has been mapped by choropleth method and the discussion on spatial pattern of the religious groups in context to their population characteristics is mainly based on what emerges on these maps.

The distribution of the population of religious groups is analysed on the basis of a modified form of concentration index. The modified index of population concentration is the ratio between the actual and the average population of a spatial unit on the one hand, and the ratio between the actual area and the average area of the spatial unit on the other. The index, thus, derived can be mathematically

expressed as under:

$$CI = (P/_{v}P) / (A/_{v}A)$$

Where, CI is the concentration index; P and A are the actual population and area of the unit; and $_{v}P$ and $_{v}A$ are the average population size and average area of spatial unit respectively.

To measure the growth rate of various religious groups, 1991 Census data is used. The growth rate is calculated by using the formula:

$$\frac{P_1 - P_0}{P_0} \times 100$$

Where, P_1 is the population of a religious group in 2001; and P0 is the population of a religious group in the base year (1991).

The analysis of the sex composition of the population belonging to different religious groups is done using the measure of sex ratio. Similarly, from the Census tables pertaining to number of illiterates and literates by each religious group, the literacy rate is calculated. Further, from the literacy rate the gender gap in literacy is analysed.

From the Census tables depicting workers and non-workers by religious groups the work participation rate, which is the percentage of workers to total population is calculated.

The age structure of various religious groups is analysed by using dependency ratio as a measure. Dependency ratio is computed as under:

Dependency Ratio = $\{(^{P}0\text{-}14 + {}^{P}60 +)/ {}^{P}15\text{-}59\} \times 100$

Where, $^{P}0\text{-}14$, $^{P}60 +$, and $^{P}15\text{-}59$ refer to population in the age groups 0-14 years, above 60 years and 15-59 years respectively. Furthermore, the population of various religious groups is compared with reference to three broad age groups: 'Young Dependents' (less than 15 years), 'Working Age Group' (15-59 years) and 'Old Dependents' (60 years and above).

Conclusions

The main conclusions drawn from the study are as under:

(I)   The spatial distributional pattern of population adhering to different major religious groups in India seems to be the outcome of centuries of their diffusion process. Hinduism being the oldest religion of the land dating back to 4000 B.C., the Hindus were virtually spread all over the country. Likewise, the Muslims too were geographically scattered all over the country and barring few exceptions the spatial pattern of their distribution corresponded with that of the Hindus. However, the distributional pattern of the remaining four religious groups presented a totally different picture and had a tendency of clustering in distinct pockets.

(II)   The investigation of spatial patterns of growth of major religious groups of India provides that the inter-census period 1991-2001 was marked by unprecedented acceleration in the growth of the Jain population. During the period 1981-91, their growth rate was much below than that of the 'All religious groups'. The abysmally high growth during 1991-01 was the outcome of variations in the Census reporting. The Sikhs showed the lowest growth rate, while it was the highest in the case of Muslims. This difference was largely an outcome of differentials in fertility rates as also due to difference in the propensity to emigrate. The fertility rate of the Sikhs was lower than that of the Muslims.

(III)   Religious groups presented a contrasting picture in their sex composition in the rural-urban areas. Strangely, as opposed to the general notion of sex ratio being lower in the urban areas than their rural counterparts, the Christians and the Jains

recorded relatively higher sex ratio in the urban areas. This could be seen in the light of their higher child sex ratio in the urban areas. The child sex ratio was higher among the Jains in the urban than the rural areas, whereas it was almost the same among the Christians in the rural and urban areas. Contrary to these two religious groups, the urban sex ratio was lower than the rural among the Hindus, the Muslims, the Sikhs and the Buddhists. This was attributable to male selectivity in rural to urban migration as also to a relatively lower child sex ratio in the urban areas among these religious groups. The higher costs of living, difficulty of housing and social factors restrict family migration.

(IV) There were much of variations in the literacy rates of the six major religious groups of the country. Their literacy rates varied from 59.1 per cent (among the Muslims) to 94.1 per cent (among the Jains). The variations in their literacy rates were largely an outcome of their geographical positioning, economic activity, need for education and social structure. Moreover, their literacy rates were also the product of certain historical factors such as socio-religious movements like Arya Samaj movement, Singh Sabha movement, Neo-Buddhist movement and the work of the Christian missionaries.

(V) All the religious groups displayed varied proportion of workers in their population. This could largely be attributable to the difference in the proportion of their females in the workforce. Higher work participation rate of the Buddhists was primarily due to their high female work participation rate. Contrastingly, the low work participation rate for the Muslims was mainly due to their low female work participation rate. More than religion, it was the region and its socio-cultural manifestations, which influenced the proportion of workers.

(VI) The Muslims and Jains were the two religious groups, which had age structures quite diverse from the other major religious groups. The Muslims had the highest proportion of 0-14 years of age group and the lowest proportions of 'working' and 60 years and above age groups, whereas the Jains had the lowest proportion of 0-14 years age group and the highest proportions of 'working' and 60 years and above age groups. This highlights that the Muslims were in the early stage of demographic transition, while the Jains were at an advanced stage. In all the religious groups, the proportion of females was lower than that of the males in 0-14 years of age group but higher than the males in the 60 years and above age group. The low proportion of females in 0-14 years of age group portrays discrimination against the girl child by all the religious groups.