Religion in India: Religious Composition of Population and Religious Regions

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Abstract

Religion plays a vital role in daily as well as socio-economic and political life of an Indian. This paper describes the spatial concentration of seven religious groups of India based on census 2011data on religion. Areas of majority (> 50 per cent share) and minority (< 50 per cent share) for each religious group are worked out by taking district as a spatial unit for detailing district level concentration. Spatial concentration is also measured by Location Quotient for each religious group. Minority and majority binary are explained at district level. At second, the paper attempts to carve out Religious Regions of India for seven religious groups to examine the religious cohesion and segregation among Indians, by using cluster analysis technique. The Hindus forms the largest cluster followed by Muslims, Christians, Sikhs and Buddhists while Jains are not enough in numbers to show their presence in the religious regions of India. When inter-state differences are looked at, then Hindus too become a minority in seven states while inter-districts analysis results in 110 districts of Hindu minority. The findings of the paper shows the demographic uniqueness and it can help in informed policy decisions.

Keywords: Religion, Spatial concentration, Core and Peripheral areas, Religious regions, Religious clusters

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Religion: an introduction

The word 'Religion' is defined as a set of fundamental ideas and practices that bind people together in a cosmos, an ordered world, and that link them in community (Eck, 2012). It has roots in Latin word '*ligare*' means to bind and permeates all aspects of life of its adherents. India being a vast country has people of various faiths representing a rainbow of religious geographic tapestry.

Among the major religions of the world, Christianity dominates with the largest number of followers making 33 per cent (2.4 billion of the 7.2 billion people in 2012), with at least 126 countries having Christian majority. At second is the Islam with a 1.7 billion people accounting for 24 per cent of the total population. Thirty two countries have more than 90 per cent Muslim population. Hinduism ranks third accounting for 1.1 billion people around the world and makes about 15 per cent of the population of the world. It is the oldest religion to emerge among the peoples of Indo-Gangetic plains about 4000 years ago (Knox, 2015). Only India (78.3 per cent), Nepal (81.3 per cent) and Mauritius (48.3 per cent) are the countries which have majority Hindu population. The rest of the world population adheres either to Buddhism, or organized religions like Sikhism and Judaism, or traditional regional or local beliefs or claims to be unaffiliated to any religion or creed (Krishan, 2017).

The Indian subcontinent, from its earliest millennia, has been something of a crossroads of cultures and religions (Clothey, 2006). It has been a land of vibrant culture and multiple religions. It is the birthplace of many of the world religions, the oldest being the Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and the newer one like Sikhism.

A few geographers had worked on religion in India. Religion as part of cultural geography has a great impact on the socio-economic and political life in India. The first social scientist to provide a comprehensive spatial analysis of religious communities in India was Jon Brush (1949), followed by Davis (1951). Gosal and Mukerji (1970) analysed relative importance of various religious groups by drawing choropleth maps based on 1961 Indian census data. Dutt and Davgun (1979), find out the religious regions of India with a factoral regionalization. They found that Hindus are spread all over India but have lesser concentration in the periphery. In 1995, Gopal Krishan wrote on demographic space expansion by minorities in India. Premi (2004) examined the demographic perspective of Religion in India. In USA, Zelinsky, Sopher, Shortridge, Webster, Crawford, Jordan, Bauer and many others have worked for carving religious regions using various techniques at different time periods. Recently Bauer (2012) has revisited religious regions of USA using cluster analysis.

This paper looks at spatial concentration of various religions in India in terms of majority-

minority at district level and finds out the religious regions by using cluster analysis technique. It also finds out that factor analysis as an inefficient technique to regionalize religious groups in India. The religious tapestry of India is shown with a radar diagrams (figure 1)
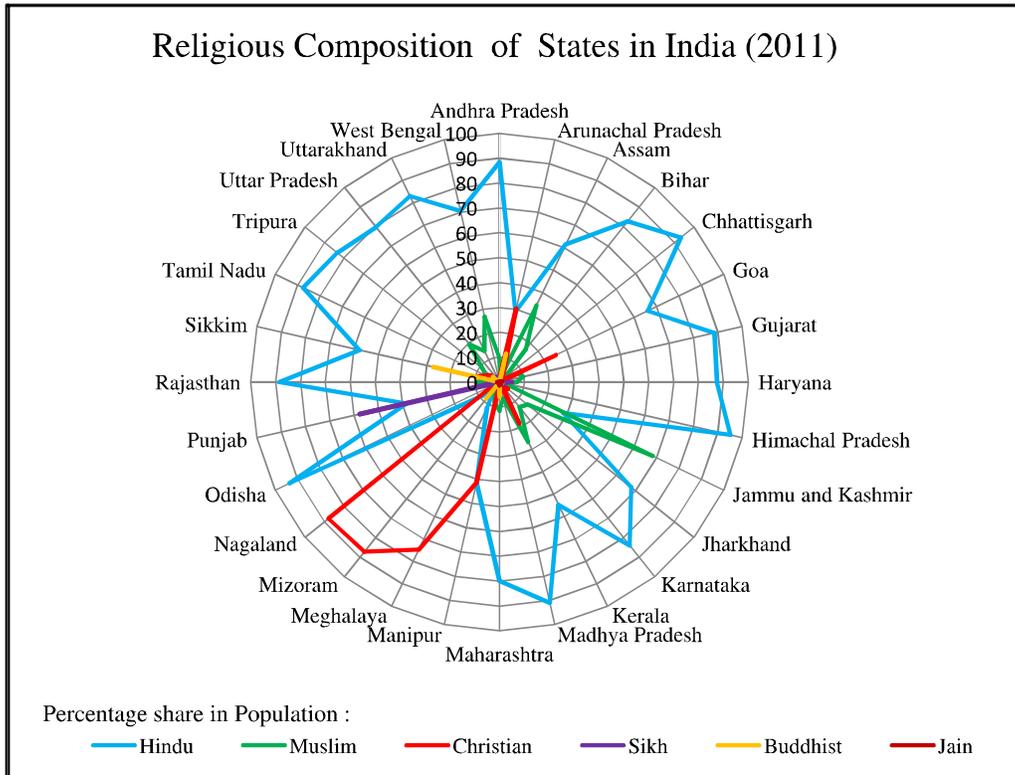

Figure 1. Religious composition of states in India, 2011

for states.

Data Sources and Research Methodology

The census is the only source for nationwide authentic data encompassing a population of 121.08 crore persons. Census 2011 series C-01 provides population data (state and district level) by religious communities (www.censusindia.gov.in/2011census). Household series H-1 provides data on district wise census houses. These data variables were standardized by expressing the numbers of adherents in each district in to percentage out of the total population of the district. For identifying the religious regions of India, data reduction technique is used i.e. factor analysis and cluster analysis. A number of tables resulting from these operations through SPSS are analysed and explained to sum up the findings. A 'Dendogram' was drawn by using hierarchical cluster analysis which gives a fair idea about the number of clusters required in a distribution. As Cluster analysis collapses the

data row-wise by finding rows of data that are similar to one another. An important decision when using k-means clustering is choosing the number of clusters (Bauer, 2012). Here the number of clusters chosen is a manifestation of drawing appropriate religious clusters of diverse Indian landscape.

Trends in growth of different Religions in India

People of various religions are not uniformly occupying the holy land of India. Hinduism being the major religion has about 80 per cent share in total population. Noticeably since independence in 1947 the Hindu population has dropped by 5.19 percent whereas the Muslims have increased their share by 4.27 percent from 1951-2011 (Table 1). No other

Surely India's religious tapestry has shrinking Hindus, expanding Muslims, and almost stagnant Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists and Jains religion has experienced a significant change.

Table 1: Percent adherents to various Religious faiths in India (1881-2011).

Census	Hindus	Muslims	Christians	Sikhs	Buddhists	Jains	Other Religions
1881*	75.1	19.97	0.71	0.74	0.07	0.49	2.92
1891*	74.2	20.41	0.77	0.68	0.09	0.51	3.34
1901*	72.9	21.88	0.98	0.77	0.1	0.47	2.9
1911*	71.7	22.39	1.21	1	0.11	0.41	3.18
1921*	70.7	23.23	1.47	1.06	0.12	0.39	3.03
1931*	70.7	23.49	1.77	1.28	0.23	0.37	2.16
1941*	69.5	24.28	1.91	1.4	0.12	0.37	2.42
1951*	**84.99**	**9.93**	**2.3**	**1.74**	**0.45**	**0.36**	**0.23**
1961**	83.4	10.7	2.4	1.8	0.7	0.5	0.3
1971**	82.7	11.2	2.6	1.9	0.7	0.5	0.4
1981**	82.3	11.8	2.4	1.9	0.7	0.5	0.4
1991**	81.5	12.6	2.3	1.9	0.8	0.4	0.4
2001**	80.5	13.4	2.3	1.9	0.8	0.4	0.6
2011***	79.8	14.2	2.3	1.7	0.7	0.4	0.9

Sources: *Dutt, A.K., and S. Davgun. 1979. "Religious pattern of India with a Factoral Regionalization." *GeoJourna*3(2), p. 204.

** Premi, Mahendra. 2004. "Religion in India: A Demographic Perspective." *Economic and Political Weekly* 39, p. 4298.

***Census of India: Data on Religion, C-01 Population by Religious Community, India, 2011.

Expression of Religiosity in India - The Places of Worship

Before a descriptive account on spatial distribution of Indian population on religious basis a brief introduction to the spatial expression of religiosity won't be out of context. Human beings create sacred landscapes by attaching sense to places to connect and converse with God actively. These get manifest as temples, mosques, churches, gurudwaras etc.

and commonly known as places of worship. Worldwide such places are focal points of religious activities and become expressions of religiosity. India being a home of 1.21 billion people belonging to various faiths has 3,013,140 places of worship (Census 2011, H-1series). There is one place of worship per square kilometre of area and these are proportionately more in rural India (2,419,700 or 80.6 per cent) than in urban India (593,440 or 19.4 per cent) (Krishan, 2017). It is interesting to know that India has more places of worship than the combined numbers of school/colleges (2,106,709) and hospitals (683,228). Here it is found that district wise places of worship in per cent strongly correspond with per cent of district wise population (correlation coefficient = 0.767). It confirms the fact that religion is an important aspect of an Indians' life. Figure 2 and Figure 3 looks at the spatiality of places of worship per lakh population and per 100 square kilometre area.
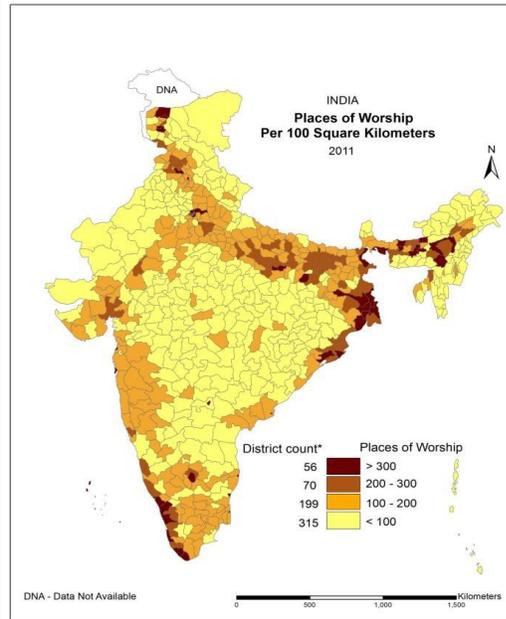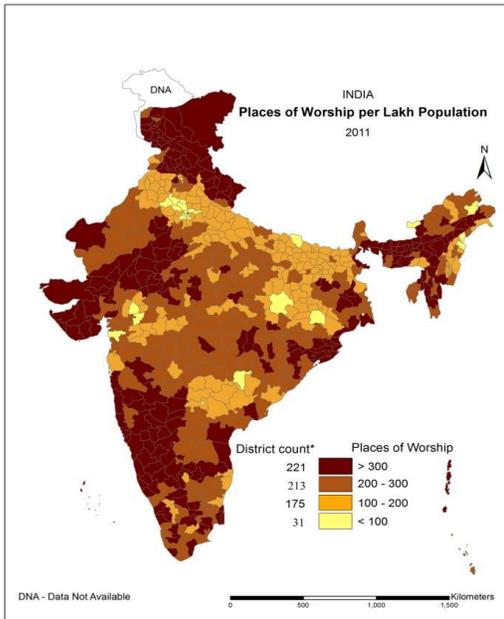

Figure 2: Figure 2: District wise places of worship per lakh population

Figure 3: District wise places of worship per 100 sq. km

India's Religious Landscape

On the basis of religion heterogeneous Indian population can be divided in seven major religious groups. Here the religious landscape of India is seen with the spectacles of majority (> 50 per cent share) and minority (< 50 per cent share) by taking district wise population data in percentage. Location quotient as a measure of spatial concentration is also used by comparing the district concentration of each religion with the national concentration.

The Hindus

Hinduism is the oldest religion of India. The origin of Hinduism goes back to a very distant past and it is almost impossible to give a continuous account of Hinduism from its beginning to its present form (Nag, 2007). In 2011, Hindus comprised more than three-fourth of the Indian population and thus has a greater impact on the cultural landscape of the country.
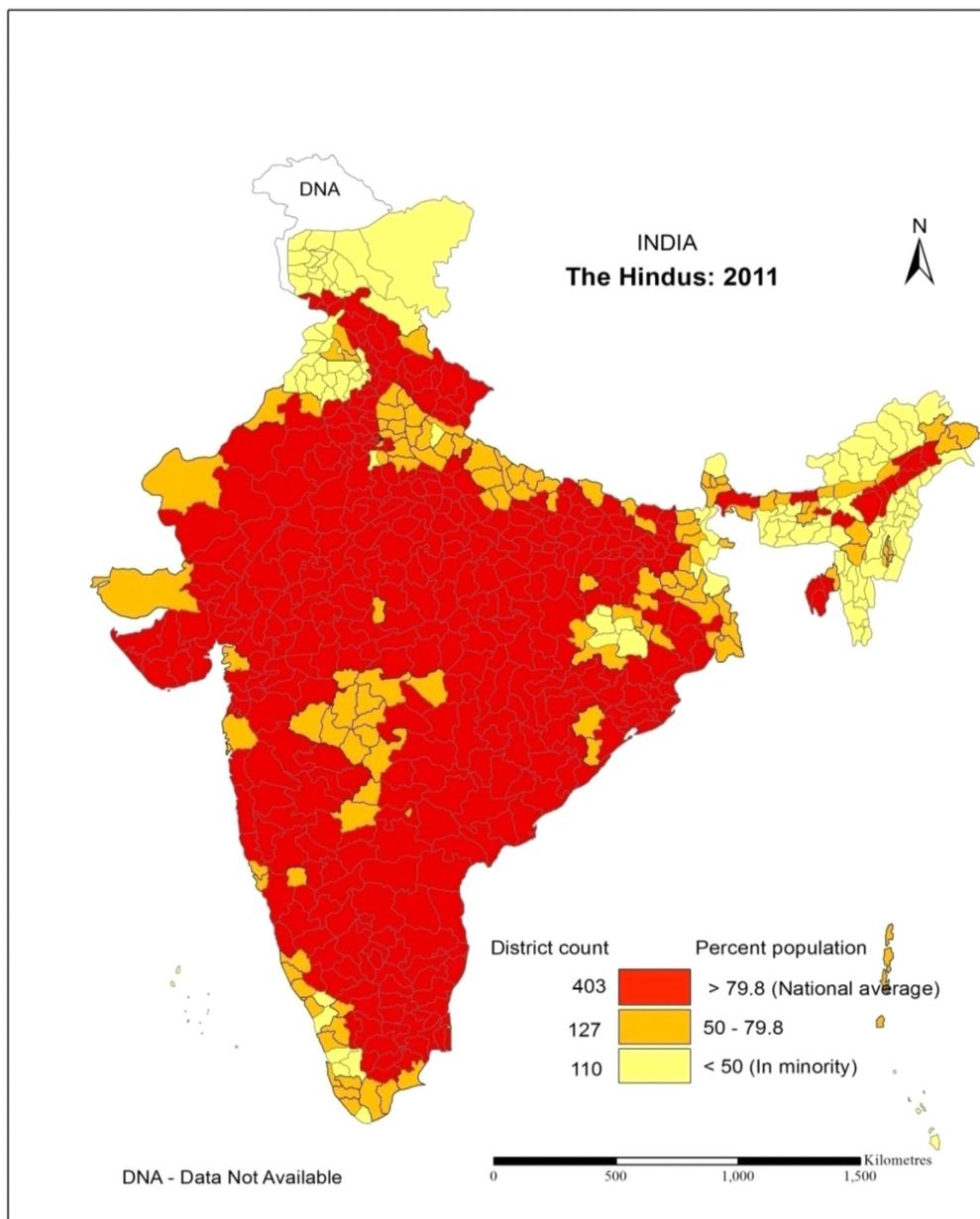

Figure 4. Hindus in India (2011)

Inter-state data analysis confirms 21 states and 6 union territories have Hindu majority while 7 states and one union territory have Hindus as a minority religion. Though at district level with a confirmed slowly and steadily declining population share, Hindus are in absolute majority only in 530 districts. The core area of Hindu concentration includes 403 districts where they have percentage share higher than their national average of 79.8 per cent (see figure 4). Major areas of concentration include 200 districts with more than 90 per cent Hindu population. Only 81 districts comprise more than 95 per cent Hindus and merely 7 districts cross 99 per cent mark. In these seven districts, four are in the state of Odisha (Dhenkanal, Boudh, Nayagarh, Subarnpur), two are in Uttrakhand (Rudraprayag, Bageshwar) and Mahendergarh in Haryana.

Hindus are in minority in 110 districts. They have a lesser concentration in Kashmir and Punjab in the north, most of the north-eastern states and a few districts in southern state of Kerala. A central patch comprising few districts of Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand, Eastern West Bengal along the border of Bangladesh also has meager concentration. Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep has scant Hindu population. The lesser concentration still follows the general statement that Hindus are less concentrated in peripheral areas though their spread is all over India. The distributional pattern for Hindus reveals that the forested and rugged areas such as central India (Madhya Pradesh) and north India (Himachal Pradesh and Uttrakhand) have always displayed a Hindu majority, probably due to their undesirable, and even inaccessible terrain, which made it unattractive to Muslim invaders and foreign rulers (Dutt et al., 1996). In the same way the southern Indian region including parts of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh also have been stayed away from the influence of Muslims and Christians. Jammu & Kashmir and western Uttar Pradesh in the north India are having low percentage of Hindu population due to Muslim influence for a long time. Punjab being the land of Sikhs has low concentration of Hindus. In North-East India, all tribal majority areas have experienced a greater incidence of Christian missionary work while in Bengal tract low percentage of Hindus is a result of conversion to Islam from early 13th century till the independence of country in 1947 (Gill & Bhardwaj, 2010). In the south, the western coast has less concentration mainly in Kerala as its population has notable proportion of Muslims and Christians. Since early historical times the coasts of Kerala had link with the Arabian and Christian world. In due course of time it was largely

influenced by the religion of the sailors and traders. Another area of low proportion of Hindus is in the state of Jharkhand, people living here belong to animists or other religions. This area had profound influence of Christian missionaries during and after British rule in India.

Location Quotient is a measure of relative share of a spatial unit in the total of any distribution (Krishan & Singh, 2017, pp. 157). Numerically speaking, Hindus have a LQ $\geq$ 1 in 403 districts indicating their relative concentration in about 62 per cent districts. These districts make core areas of Hindu religion (Table 2 & figure 4).

**Table 2: Measure of Concentration, Location Quotient (LQ): The results of LQ for 640 districts for all Religions**.

LQ values	Hindus	Muslims	Christians	Sikhs	Buddhists	Jains	Others
LQ ≥ 1 in no. of districts	403	163	156	60	82	134	97
LQ < 1 in no. of districts	237	477	484	580	558	506	543

Source: Calculated from the Census Data, 2011.

The Muslims

Islam came to the Indian subcontinent within decades of its birth (Clothey, 2006). In medieval India, particularly in 12th century Muslims stayed here and ruled over larger parts of country. They spread from Punjab plains to Assam Valley. Most of Muslim rulers favoured the conversion policy from other religious faiths to Islam. Today majority of Muslims in India are the progeny of Hindus converted to Islam.

In 2011 Muslims were the second largest religious community and the largest minority in India. They constituted 14.2 per cent of country's total population. In 32 districts they enjoy absolute majority while in 131 districts Muslim population crosses their national average figure but remain lower than the absolute majority mark. Figure 5 throws light on the areas of Muslim concentration. In the extreme north, Jammu & Kashmir has 16 districts having Muslim majority. It is the only state having Muslim majority in India. Rampur district in Uttar Pradesh and Mewat (Nuh) in Haryana has absolute majority in northern plains. In south Mallapuram district in Kerala has 70.24 per cent Muslims. Another remarkable area of Muslim majority districts lies along Bangladesh border. It includes 12 districts of West Bengal, Assam and Bihar. Away from mainland, Lakshadweep also enjoy overwhelming majority with 96.58 per cent Muslim population.
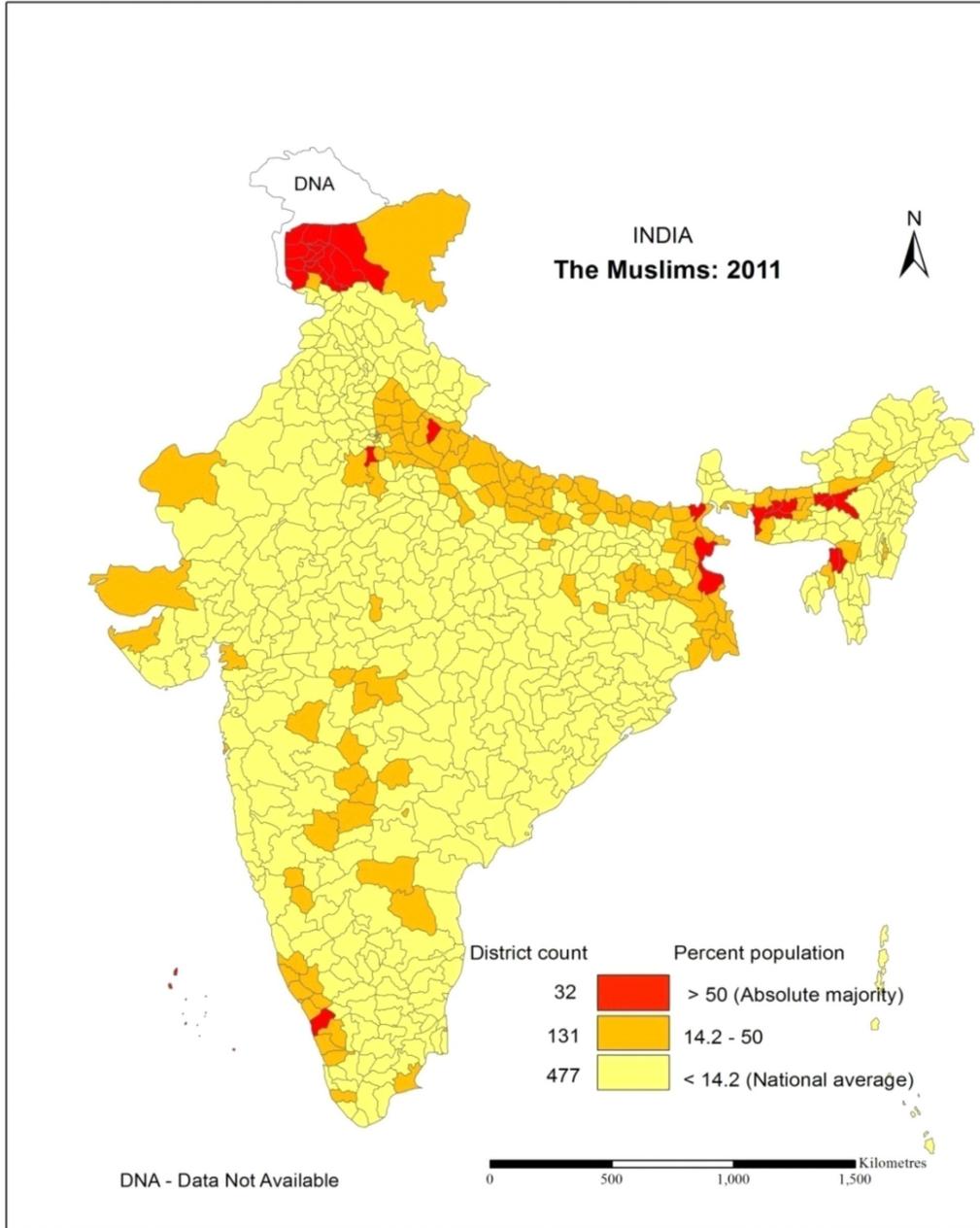
Figure 5. Muslims in India (2011)

Distributional pattern of Muslims reveals that they are concentrated in a few pockets, sparsely present all over India and least concentrated in Punjab-Haryana plains, mountainous states of Himachal Pradesh, Uttrakhand, North-Eastern states (except Assam) and a

larger area of central-eastern part of India including eastern Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Odisha. The areas of higher spatial concentration had either longer period of Muslim rule (Western Uttar Pradesh, Bengal tract) or areas having longer trading contact with traders of Middle East countries. In Kashmir region the combination of Muslim rule and influence of Sufism had played important role in religious conversion to Islam (Gill & Bhardwaj, 2010). Bengal tract and adjoining areas had witnessed Muslim rule during the medieval period of Indian history (1206-1757) where massive religious conversion took place. After partition of India in 1947 and during 1971 liberation war, large scale in migration has taken place towards Indian side (Dutt & Davgun, 1979). Muslims of Kerala or Malabar Coast are the result of conversion of locals through sea born contacts with Muslim traders from the Middle East.

Muslims have a LQ ≥ 1 in 163 districts and confirms their relative concentration in 25 per cent districts. In 477 districts they mark their presence with a LQ less than one (Table 2 & figure 5). Their distribution confirms the general statement that Hindus are less concentrated in peripheral areas of India. Peripheral areas in the north, north-eastern and southern India have minor to major concentration of Muslims.

The Christians

Christianity as the largest religion of the world ranks third in India after Hindus and Muslims. They constituted 2.3 per cent of the total population in 2011. In 156 districts they exceed their national average but mark absolute majority only in 35 districts (more than Muslims). The largest majority area of Christians includes 33 districts in north-eastern India. Other two districts of absolute majority include Simdega (51.14 per cent) in Jharkhand and Nicobar district (70.78 per cent) in Andaman & Nicobar Island. Figure 6 shows their spatial concentration. They occupy three distinct areas namely the north-eastern hilly states; twin clustered districts of Jharkhand and Odisha and the Malabar (Kerala-Goa) coast. In the north-east, the states of Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland are truly Christian majority states with all 26 districts having Christian majority. Manipur has absolute majority of Christians in five districts. Kurung Kumey and Tirap are two Christian majority districts of Arunachal Pradesh. Each district in India has Christians' presence. In north-western India only Gurdaspur district in Punjab has 7.68 per cent population of Christians.

India's Christian population is overwhelmingly the result of missionary work of Christian during and after the colonial rule, and sea born contacts with Christian world during pre colonial period. In north-eastern states and central-eastern tribal belts of India, tribal people were attracted by missionaries. Both the regions were highly inaccessible and physically isolated from rest of India's population and provided an ample opportunity to Christians Missionaries to spread their religion. Kerala had imprints of early migration of Christians

from the west to Malabar Coast leading to a larger population of Christians in south-west India at present.
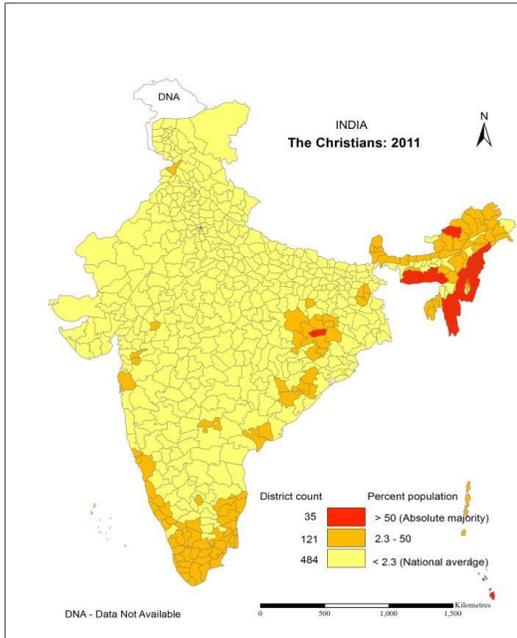

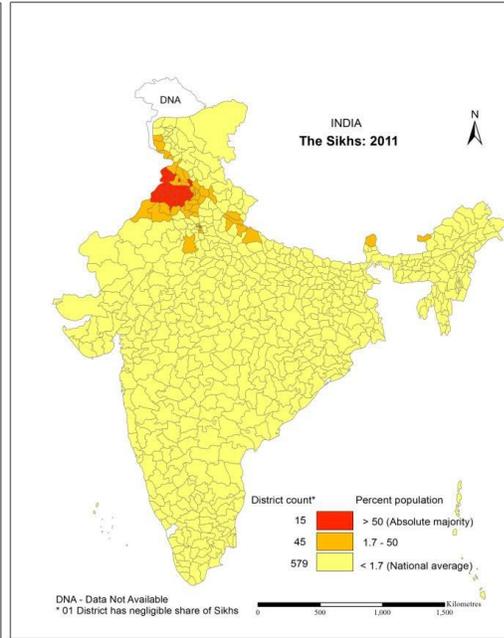Figure 6. Christians in India (2011).
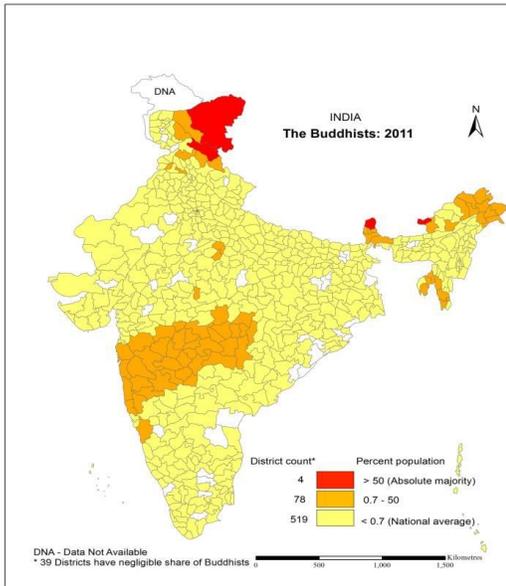

Figure 7. Sikhs in India (2011).

Figure 8. Buddhists in India (2011).
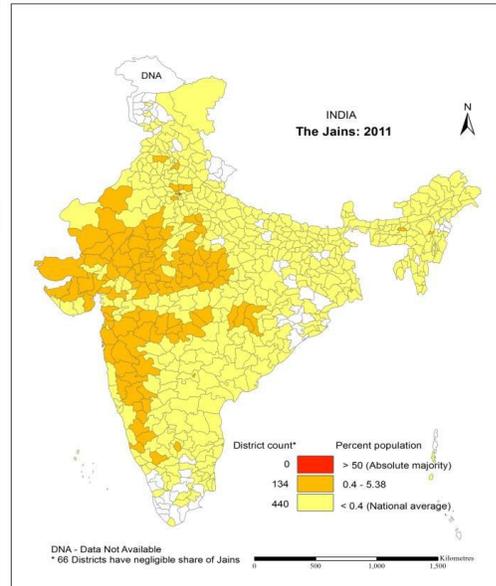

Figure 9. Jains in India (2011).

Christians have a LQ ≥ 1 in 156 districts and confirms their relative concentration in 24 per cent districts. In 484 districts they mark their presence with a LQ less than one (Table 2 & figure 6). Again their spatial distribution in southern and north-eastern peripheral parts of India confirms the general statement that Hindus are less concentrated in peripheral areas of India. However Chhattisgarh-Jharkhand Christian belt is an exception to this peripheral hypothesis.

The Sikhs

The Sikhs form the fourth largest religious community in India with a total population of 2.08 crores. It makes only 1.72 per cent of total population of India. They are in absolute majority in only 15 districts of Punjab. In 60 districts they have population more than their national average while in 580 districts they are present below their national average (figure 7). Sikhs concentrate in Punjab and its adjoining areas. As a whole Punjab is the land of Sikhs where Sikh rulers like Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1680-1739) ruled in 18th century. Partition of country resulted in a major reshuffling of population across boarder and resulted in concentration of Sikhs in present day Punjab region. Adjoining to this land some districts of Haryana, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir also have 2 to 26 per cent Sikh population. During 1950s and early 1960s Punjab witnessed a sizable outmigration of Sikh peasants to thinly populated *Terai* belt of Uttar Pradesh (Gill & Bhardwaj, 2010). Sikhism being one of the newest religions in India is indigenous to the land of Punjab. Their numbers may be small but they are present in all 640 districts from north to south and east to west in India except Malapuram district of Kerala where their per cent share is negligible. Even in international migration Sikhs have outreach to distant countries mainly Canada and USA in large numbers.

Sikhs have a LQ ≥ 1 in 60 districts and their relative concentration is in 9 per cent districts. In 580 districts they mark their presence with a LQ less than one (Table 2 & figure 7).

The Buddhists

In 2011 Buddhists constituted only 0.7 per cent (84.4 lakhs) of national population. They are present above their national average mark in 82 districts. In only 04 districts they cross the absolute majority figure of 50 per cent (figure 8).

Twang district in Arunachal Pradesh has the highest proportion of Buddhists (69.87 per cent) followed by 66.4 percent in Leh-Laddakh district of Jammu & Kashmir, Lahul-Spiti (62.01 per cent) in Himachal Pradesh and North District (53.35 per cent) in Sikkim. Though 39 districts have negligible per cent share of Buddhists, they show their presence in 519 other districts with a percentage share below national average. Figure 8 illustrates three distinct areas of Buddhist presence. First one is in the northern mountainous states; second area includes four North-Eastern states namely: Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura,

Mizoram and Darjiling district of West Bengal. All these districts are in proximity to Tibetan territory. Another area of Buddhist concentration is the state of Maharashtra, where many low caste Hindus embraced Buddhism in the 1950s due to Baba Sabeb Ambedkar's movement (Dutt & Davgun, 1979). Their concentration varies from 0.75 per cent in Ahamednagar to 18.08 per cent in Akola district.

If we look at the Location Quotient, the Buddhists have a LQ ≥ 1 in 82 districts while 558 districts have LQ < 1 (Table 2 & figure 8). Buddhists too concentrate in peripheral areas of India and further consolidate the statement that Hindus have lesser concentration in peripheral areas.

The Jains

Percentage share of Jains remained more or less stagnant since 1881 to 2011, from 0.49 per cent to 0.4 per cent. In 2011 they had a population of 44.5 lakh only. Jains do not form majority in any district, hence become the national minority community both at state and district levels. Above the national average they are present in 134 districts of India, mainly in urban centres as business class people. Their highest concentration is in Mumbai with 5.38 per cent share in its population. Jains have more than 2 per cent population share in only 11 districts of India. However, there are 66 districts where per cent share of Jains is very low or negligible. Figure 9 illustrates that Jains are concentrated in the western and central part of India (parts of Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra). The Jains mainly dwell in urban areas and are mostly engaged in commerce industry. In villages they are mainly residing with the title '*Baniya*' engaged in commercial activities like grocery or running small scale industries like food processing units, oil mills or flour mills.

Location Quotient of Jains is more than one in 134 districts while in 506 districts it is less than one.

Other Religions

In the census enumeration tables for religion, seventh and eighth categories of religion are '*Other religions and persuasions (incl.Unclassified Sect.)*' and '*Religion not stated*'. Here both these categories are added to make the seventh category with the name "Other Religions". Actually in most of the studies hardly any attention is given to this category. It includes people of various faiths like animist, naturalist or belonging to some other sects, other than the traditional religious faiths like Hinduism. They numbered more than one crore (1.08 crore), which is more than the numbers of Buddhists and Jains. In 2011 they had 0.9 per cent share in country's population. Only 7 districts have absolute majority. They exist in two major areas, the north-eastern hilly states (Meghalaya, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim) and the central-eastern plateau region (Jharlkand, West Bengal,

Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha). These areas are homes of tribal people who live in forested areas and follow other religions.

India: Religious Regions

The concept of regionalization is the most fundamental one in geographical studies. Regionalization is a special procedure of classification in which contiguous spatial units (region) become the end result from the individuals classified as spatial units (usually areas) (Gregory, 2009). Dutt and Davgun (1979) investigated the scope of religious regions of India in an attempt to determine the feasibility of identification of religious regions of India; and tried to check the compatibility of factor analysis for such type of research. They have used percentage of each religion in total population for 356 districts as per Census 1971. Factor analysis technique was used for deriving religious regions with 'Quartimax rotation'. Their work reduced the data in to four factors: (i) High: Christian & Others, Low: Hindus & Jains (ii) Muslim (iii) Sikh and (iv) Buddhist. Then on the basis of these factors they divided India into five major religious regions: Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, Sikh, and Mixed.

Factor analysis collapses the columns of the dataset to construct a smaller number of new factors or indices that are linear combinations of the original variables. In the present study it is found that Factor Analysis technique is not providing appropriate results, as there is a very low degree of correlation among the seven religious groups. The factor analysis technique also seems to be not working for the given problem as the KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin - Measure of Sampling Adequacy) test fails with a value of 0.043 instead of a required minimum value (> 0.50). Both the results indicate that factor analysis technique is not feasible in this case. Cluster analysis collapses the data row-wise by finding rows of data that are similar to one another. In this way, clusters of similar observations are created (Rogerson, 2015). These are the two most common data reduction techniques in geographic research. Here cluster analysis can serve the purpose of regionalisation. Cluster analysis in geography has a widespread application in the area of geodemographics. It reduces large numbers of spatial data variables into a small number of types. In such studies where we need to divide a large region into smaller numbers of continuous subregions, cluster analysis suffices the purpose of regionaliastion (Krishan & Singh, 2017). The following steps were used to carry out the clustering using SPSS: Analyze > Classify > K- Means Cluster Analysis > Enter Variables (7) > No. of Clusters (6) > Method: Iterate and classify > Ok. A dendogram was also plotted to see the optimum number of clusters by using Hierarchical Cluster Analysis. The following are the results of clustering process (Table 3).

Table 3: Results of cluster analysis for seven religious groups based on 640 districts' data.

Final Cluster Centers (after 10 iteration)

Religion	Cluster					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Hindus	30.89	6.55	**86.13**	**39.64**	34.00	**35.11**
Muslims	1.96	1.88	9.55	2.88	**63.61**	5.94
Christians	.89	**86.85**	1.60	8.39	1.12	**29.23**
Sikhs	**65.77**	.08	.76	.67	.42	.07
Buddhists	.07	2.55	.74	**44.97**	.33	.95
Jains	.12	.04	.32	.06	.05	.04
Others	.30	2.06	.91	3.39	.46	**28.66**

Source: Based on results of Cluster Analysis with the help of SPSS.

The clustering operation gave four clearly defined and two mixed religious clusters. The Sikhs, Christians, Hindus and Muslims make sharp boundaries of their dominant areas while two mixed religious regions are: the Buddhists+Hindus and the Hindus+ Christians+Others. The Jains are so small in their numbers as well as their per cent share that their presence is not registered in the final outcome of religious regions. Figure 10 illustrate the vivid picture of religious regions of India in six shades.

Hindus form the largest religious region, being widespread in the country makes the core of the country. They have lesser concentration in the peripheral areas. They concentrate in 508 districts (79 per cent districts of India). In Jammu & Kashmir they represent only four southern districts namely Jammu, Udhampur, Kathua and Samba. In the Valley of Kashmir where they were residing since generations, were forcefully evacuated by Muslims under separatist movement during 1980s. The country saw the large scale ousting of Kashmiri pandits during that time. In Punjab, three Hindu dominated districts (Hoshiarpur, Jalandhar, SBS Nagar) occur in the hub of the Sikhs. The Hindus make a more or less contiguous region covering almost the whole northern plains except Punjab, few districts of Uttar Pradesh and the northern parts of West Bengal. In the west they have monopoly while in the east this monopoly is broken by few districts of Jharkhand state. In south there is remarkable homogeneity except the districts along Malabar Coast. Thus Hindus make a spectacular and the largest religious region of India.
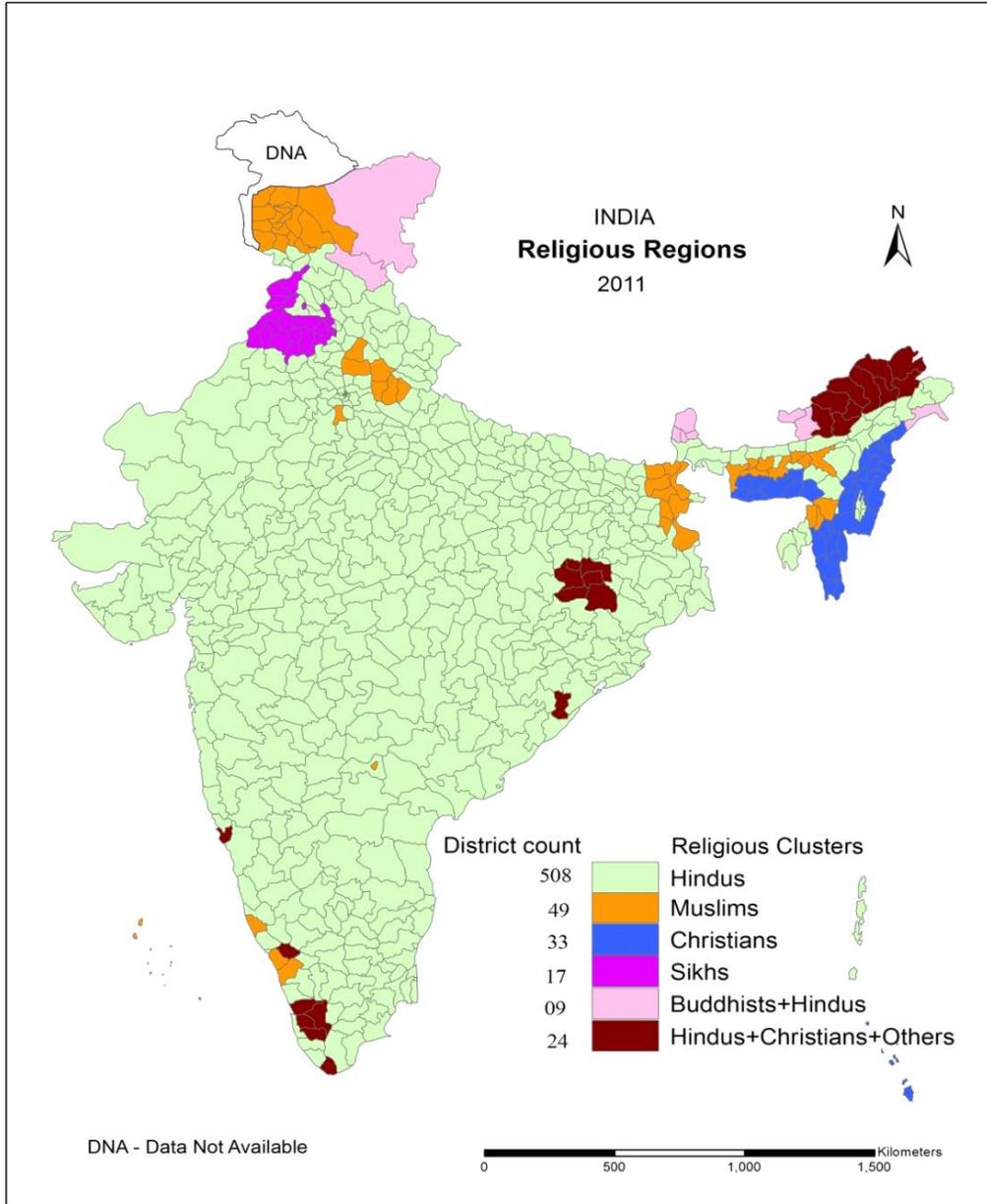
Figure 10. Religious Regions of India based on Cluster Analysis results (2011)

The second religious cluster represents the imprints of Islam on the land of India. This cluster has four distinct patches, covering 49 districts of India. The first area is the Kashmir Valley where Muslims are concentrated in most of the districts. Since independence this area has infiltration from Pakistan border. Second area covers six districts of north-western Uttar Pradesh and Mewat district of Haryana state. This area has long being under Muslim

influence since Delhi Sultanet to Mughal period in the medieval history of India. Third area is in north-eastern part of India along Bangladesh boarder encompassing a total of 20 districts (4 in Bihar, 2 in Jharkhand, 3 in West Bengal and 11 in Assam). Prior to independence this area was heavily populated by Muslims, and formed the basis of formation of East Pakistan. Still Bangladesh's peripheral areas are Muslim dominated on Indian side. In Assam there is large scale illegal infiltration along international border since independence, and it also becomes a burning political issue during state elections for decades. Fourth area of Muslim region is on the south western coast of India including three coastal districts of Kerala and Lakshadweep islands. Hyderabad makes the 49th district of this religious region, as it remained under Muslim rule for long period of time.

Third religious cluster comprises 33 districts populated by Christians in the north eastern India. This forms a contiguous area including 31 districts of Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Meghalaya state. Tirap district of Arunachal Pradesh along Nagaland border is also part of this cluster. Away from mainland Nicobar district of Andaman & Nicobar Islands also belongs to this cluster. Most of these people are tribal converted to Christianity by missionaries during and after the British Rule in India.

Fourth religious cluster is formed by the Sikhs in the north western part of India comprising 17 districts of Punjab, the land of ten Sikh Gurus. The region is though small but forms one of the most compact religious regions of India.

Fifth religious region belongs to the Buddhists+Hindus. In this mixed religious cluster Buddhists and Hindus both make their presence with greater concentration of Buddhists in nine districts. So, the Buddhists form their cluster in three distinct pockets. The first one is in north India including Leh (Ladakh) and Kinnaur district. All four districts of Sikkim form the second pocket while the third one comprises three districts of Arunachal Pradesh. These nine districts lie along the Buddhist populated Tibet, Bhutan and China.

Sixth and the last religious cluster belong to the amalgam of Hindus, Christians and people belonging to 'other religions'. A total of 24 districts are part of this cluster, including 10 districts of Arunachal Pradesh, 6 districts of Jharkhand, one in Odisha, 5 in Kerala, one in Goa (south Goa) and Kanyakumari in Tamilnadu. In Arunachal and Jharkhand, 'Others' make larger share than the Hindus and Christians while in southern India the Christians have larger share with Hindus and a lesser share of 'Others'.

The Jainism being indigenous to land of India, records its absence on the map of religious regions.

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